

Loosed upon the World

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*

— W. B. YEATS

*For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own
concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.*

— WALTER BENJAMIN

*As this century with its bloodstained record draws to a close, the nineteenth-century
dream of one world has re-emerged, this time as a nightmare.*

— ASHIS NANDY

In 1958, a young Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe, published his first novel. An important work in the movement of literary decolonization sweeping West Africa and, more generally, the third world, this novel, *Things Fall Apart*, depicted the disastrous moment of colonization through the historical experience of the Igbo people. Achebe took his title from a poem by the Irish writer W. B. Yeats called "The Second Coming," which decades earlier had depicted a modern world besieged by turmoil and a sense of impending doom, to convey the sense of anarchy and drowned innocence that imbued the lives of his Igbo characters in the face of the historical destruction of their previous world.¹ A sense of

the imaginations of anti-imperialist national liberation struggles all over the third world. Entwined with this modern sensibility of violent chaos and catastrophic change was a prophetic will to freedom of new nations from the imposed destiny of their conquerors.

Today, fifty years later, the world is proclaimed to be in a similar moment of tremendous, rapid, and unprecedented change, an epochal moment widely understood as globalization. Once again "The Second Coming" comes to mind. For Jean and John Comaroff, anthropologists of South Africa, a "messianic, millennial capitalism" is what is "slouching towards Bethlehem," waiting to be born: "a capitalism that [despite being universally destructive] presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered."² At the turn of the millennium, globalization appears to threaten with dissolution all the familiar structures and relations of an older modern world, an apocalyptic vision that not paradoxically also bears promises of universal redemption. Now we witness the uncanny return but also transfiguration of an older, imperial, some would say totalitarian politics. And it would seem that the world has yielded the "rough beast, its hour come round at last."

In the Philippines, which finds itself both in the midst of and at the edges of this maelstrom, things are indeed falling apart. In the face of the ostensible features of accelerated processes of late modernization and globalization — namely, the feminization of labor and the worldwide movements of this labor, rapid urbanization and the explosion of a surplus floating population, the decimation of the rural peasantry, and the waging and putative defeat of a revolutionary people's war — older cultural forms and social ties, not to mention countless lives, seem to be on the brink of permanent ruin. Crisis becomes common currency for understanding the conditions of contemporary Philippine life.

What in the moment of decolonization was a radicalizing historical insight — Achebe's intimation that colonialism is the foundational crisis that lies at the heart of the felt anarchy and anxiety of Yeats's modern world — has been the shared truth of postindependence countries of the former colonial world in the past forty years. It is perhaps no longer a matter of rare political insight to recognize that the permanent crisis of the third world, as well as of the fourth and second worlds, or more generally the global south, has been the very motor of development of (and ever-immanent menace to) the capitalist first world or

the global north. In the Philippines, crisis has served as the cause of efforts by both the state and radical social movements to steer the course of history in a moment when the world would appear to be in the hands of forces beyond anyone's control. Since the popular deposing of the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, itself a permanent state of emergency built on the worsening economic, social, and political crisis from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, one crisis situation after another has obtained. From attempted military coups to murdered overseas domestic workers, from the crisis of the Philippine Left to the crisis of the new Asian economy, from the kidnappings of Chinese-Filipinos by parapolice criminal networks to the slayings and bombings in Mindanao by paramilitary criminal groups — each crisis claimed as the basis of progressive as well as reactionary actions. Crisis launches both forces: liberatory social movements and state repression. People Power 2, the progressive popular uprising in 2001 that unseated the corrupt presidential regime of Joseph Estrada, is closely followed by *Balikatan 02-1*, the joint U.S.-Philippine military exercises in the ongoing global war on terrorism. While the first aspired to achieve a new moral social order (civil democracy), the second pretends to protect that same moral social order on behalf of which it wages yet another, now seemingly endless war.

In the meantime, as more and more resources are channeled into this widening gyre of crisis, in grave efforts to keep things together and hold on to familiar and determinate paths of becoming, more and more things fall away from the privileged and ever narrower worlds that remain. Refurbished as well as unreconstructed nationalisms and transnationalisms, battles for state power and civil liberties, identity-based claims to political and economic enfranchisement, liberal-democratic ideals of civil society — such are the familiar trajectories of world-historical agency in these times, trajectories from which all other manner of human and parahuman lives, pasts, presents, and futures, cultural imaginations, and virtual realities are jettisoned. These things fall away, and their barely apprehended importance to our worlds is lost to us, who seek different holds on our immanent futures.

Decolonizing Struggles

Faced with the signs of vanishing everywhere that point to the seemingly inexorable vortex of destruction and disappearance that characterizes our global history, how are we to continue the struggle for freedom against the new fate of these

moment of world crisis, we, who live and work in some form of opposition to the orders and imperatives of global hegemonic powers, are in need of a supplement to the decolonizing truth *Things Fall Apart*. *Things Fall Apart* is an attempt to provide one such supplementary theory and practice that at once takes after and departs from the decolonizing struggles in which Achebe's literary practice took part, and, more modestly, to offer by means of this analytical method a differently politicized interpretation of the recent history of the Philippines. Recasting some common notions, "the Philippines," "literature," and "historical experience," to this end, this book develops a theory and method of reading experience as living labor that I hope will aid in our collective efforts to come to a new understanding of politics in the contemporary global moment. Indeed, the interpretation of late twentieth-century Philippine transformations that I arrive at through this theoretical perspective provides grounds for the reconceptualization of feminized labor and migration, modern authoritarianism, crony capitalism, civil society, and the cultural practice and political ontology of revolution.

As a key instrument of national liberation movements throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America, third world literatures sought to restore the historical experiences of peoples struggling against the destructive regimes of colonialism and neocolonialism, thereby bringing into being what Dolores Feria has called "the new humanism of the dispossessed."³ Third world literatures were part and parcel of the movement of decolonization to the extent that they sought to unearth and represent these experiences as the enabling means of reclaiming subjective agency and sovereignty in the face of subjugation, dependency, and marginalization on the world stage of history. The emergent culture of struggle of the colonized would consist of this process of freeing into expressivity the whole range of social life that colonialism impeded, if not obliterated. Culture was this very process of creative restitution and expressive action that Frantz Fanon argued was commensurate with the concrete, practical struggle "to bring into existence the history of the nation — the history of decolonization"

This book contends that the task of creating empowered historical subjects through the representation of submerged historical experiences was and continues to be of the utmost necessity. As E. San Juan Jr. argues, "These heterogeneous projects of resistance and revolt, inscribed in poems, stories, *testimonios*, and other performances of those formerly silenced and made invisible, are what ultimately reproduce the 'Third World' as a permanent political-cultural agency

in general transformation . . . these performances can be used to fashion emancipatory constituent subjects who are equipped with 'a memory of the future,' a recollection of hopes and dreams from which the future is extrapolated."⁴ And yet, as important as the task of creating emancipatory subjects remains, equally vital is the task of putting into language modes of experiential practice that fall short of received proper forms of historical subjectivity and social experience and yet serve as crucial means of everyday life struggles. Tangential to the aims of both hegemonic and counterhegemonic forms of political agency, these seemingly obsolescent modes of experience propel and shape the production of the very conditions of life around which organized politics revolve, as they are the inventions of people struggling with those conditions. Putting these diminished experiential practices into language thus becomes a way to contemplate the creative political potentials and alternative social resources that they might spell, potentials and resources that are instead quickly jettisoned in attempts to wrest control of a world gone awry. As crisis abounds and things fall apart, rather than mere anarchy, it is the tangential aims and *poiesis* (the poetic creations) of people's experiences that are "loosed upon the world," turning into mere fodder for the making of new universal forms of social being and aspiration — indeed, for the makings of our present globality.

To reconsider the politics of such makings, I tell a Philippine story of world transformation from the perspective of historical experiences that "fall away" from global capitalist and nation-state narratives of development as well as from social movement narratives of liberation. I look at feminist, urban protest, and revolutionary literatures from the 1960s to the 1990s and examine their renderings of oppressive contemporary social conditions of authoritarian rule, feminized labor exploitation, rural peasant tenant relations, and militarism. What I find is that in order to construct proper political subjects capable of transforming history, social movement literatures draw on supplementary modes of experience that serve as vital supports for the material conditions of social life and struggle. However, to the extent that they exceed the valorized forms of political subjectivity defined by feminism, urban activism, and the revolutionary movement, these vital modes of experience are necessarily eschewed by the very political subjects they help to constitute. In rechanneling this experiential labor for the constitution of a proper historical subject, progressive and radical literary works tend to subsume the alterity of those experiential practices into universal forms of subjectivity and agency, which are meaningful within the dominant field of

period after the Second World War of a unitary sovereign nationalist subject as the proper historical agent of an anti-imperialist movement. Much work has been accomplished by historians in subaltern studies in deconstructing this unitary nationalist subject constructed by the elite classes of newly independent former colonies and, further, in uncovering the cultural strategies of resistance of "the people" whom such a nationalist subject purportedly represents (but, as Enrique Dussel says of Eurocentric history in relation to indigenous history, effectively "covers over"). My own work is a continuation and critical extension of this subaltern studies project in relation to nonhegemonic, dissident national subjects in the contemporary period, and as articulated not in historiography but in literature.

Literature and Political Community

*They took away the language of my blood,
Giving me one "more widely understood."
More widely understood! Now Lips can never
Never with the Soul-of-Me commune
Moments there are I strain, but futile ever
To flute my feelings through some Native Tune.*

—TRINIDAD TARROSA-SUBIDO

Literature is here not to be taken as a representation of the lived experiences of particular people. Works of postcolonial literature are rather to be viewed as experiments in broader social projects, indeed, in the very imagining of modern political communities, most evidently of the nation but not exclusively so. Insofar as postindependent national literature is actively involved in projects that construct new social relations where these would seem to be impeded by the retarding forces of a continuing colonialism, literary works will necessarily draw on subjective practices and experiential modes that exceed the very projects whose aims they are called upon to further.

A brief episode in what is considered the foundational novel of the Philippine nation, José Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, limns a mode of experience that will be recognized, a hundred years later, as the mode of the "other politics" at work in nationalism. In this episode, the grotesque Doña Consolacion, the native

that she can understand Tagalog, orders the tragic native mother, Sisa, to sing for her. As Sisa sings the plaintive melody of the *kundiman*, a melancholy love song from which in the listening soldiers "awakened memories of times when they were still uncorrupted," Doña Consolacion's mocking laughter turns to pensive thought: "The voice, the meaning of the words and the song itself, impressed her. That arid and dried-up heart was perhaps thirsty for rain. She understood the song well: 'The sadness, the cold and the moisture falling from heaven wrapped in night's mantle,' according to the *kundiman*, seemed to descend on her heart as well." In perfect Tagalog, she orders Sisa to stop singing. Suddenly aware that her emotional and linguistic response has betrayed her to her native servant and feeling ashamed, she throws herself into a violent dancing frenzy, trying to force Sisa to join in her exorcist ritual by whipping at the poor woman's feet.

Doña Consolacion's denied affective sensibility in this episode depicts a cultural mode of experience that Reynaldo Ileto famously interprets as forms of *awa* (mercy/pity) and *damay* (empathetic grief), which figure prominently in peasant millenarian movements against Spanish and U.S. colonialisms in the early twentieth century. In Ileto's own subalternist argument, *awa* and *damay* were experiential modes that significantly animated and shaped Philippine nationalism, even as they could be viewed by bourgeois nationalist history only as backward, atavistic practices that needed to be brought in line with more rationalist conceptions of nationalist politics. While Rizal himself propagated a modern, Enlightenment vision of nationalist subjectivity, his literary works nevertheless invoked such cultural practices of grief and pity in order to construct the proper *ilustrado* nationalism embodied in his central character, Crisostomo Ibarra. The visceral power of Sisa's singing of the *kundiman* — the expressive force of what Tarrosa-Subido, writing under U.S. colonialism, grasped as "some Native Tune" — can thus be understood as a figuration of a mode of experience that is otherwise excised from the representation of the proper historical subject of nationalism, even as it is a motivating force of nationalism's construction.

In postcolonial theory, subalternity is identifiable only as traces or fade-out points of realities that, in their radical alterity and absolute incommensurability to notions of agency and subjectivity within an imperial episteme, can never be recovered or restored. In contrast to this notion of subalternity, the subjective practices and experiential modes that I argue fall away from the representations

or proper political subject. Social movement literatures are figured and enacted in those literatures out of the very materials of concrete reality they ethnographically render. It is precisely as this figural enactment that I write of "experience." As figural enactments, such experiences take on the consistency and status of things known and acted upon, apprehensible realities factored into the conduct of life. Placed in expressible form, they have worldly effects on actual social relations (though it should be said that literary renderings do not exhaust the experiences they depict).

If I have therefore depended on the powerful conceptual premise of the foreclosure accomplished by narrative and representation that has undergirded some of the most important critiques of feminist, antiracist, postcolonial, and queer scholarship in the past few decades, I have at the same time importantly heeded a few of these critiques' attempts, beyond the careful tracking of the operations of foreclosure, to seek in the fragments and debris that mark the limits of hegemonic narratives and representations the expressible elements of unrecognized and overlooked modes of viable life. On this view, one of my main objectives in this book has been to carefully attend to the varied, creative potential of subjective practices that socially oriented and social movement literatures attempt to figuratively capture and yet tend to diminish in the fabulation of proper historical subjects. Often viewed as atavistic and mystified habits and therefore as forms of weakness and self-oppression that need to be overcome, these devalued, supplemental experiential practices nevertheless importantly create and transform the very material, social structures in which feminists, urban activists, and revolutionary forces actively seek to intervene. Very importantly, such diminished experiences have helped to bring about broad social changes in ways that these groups could not foresee. Under the dominant sway of capitalist imperatives, supplementary modes of experience have wrought the transformed conditions of the national "prostitution" economy, the diaspora of domestic labor, the explosion of the urban informal economy, the rise of crony capitalism, the metropolitanist restructuring of the nation's capital, the deracination of the peasantry, the modernization of social relations in the countryside, the democratization of the nation, and the emergence of a permanent political state of emergency. These fallout experiences articulated in contemporary Philippine literatures can therefore serve as devices for tracking the dynamics of political and economic transformation, which they invisibly mediate.

In this book, "the Philippines" serves as one important theoretical place from

which to view and understand the larger world within which it is situated. On the margins of the new industrializing economy of the Asia Pacific, as a principal source of undervalued labor both for the region and for the world at large, at home to one of the few living revolutionary communist movements in the world, and as a key geopolitical base for cold war and post-cold-war U.S. global politics, the Philippines is the site of heightened dynamics and social contradictions in the universalizing processes that shaped the last few decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. The Philippines therefore affords a view of local social conditions that underwrite the nation's own participation in the transnational processes that have resulted in, for example, the establishment of a new international division of labor, the emergence of an urban-based transnational finance economy, and the political democratization and neoliberalist restructuring of formerly authoritarian nation-states. This peripheral story of Philippine life brings into focus the liminal makings of globalization, its endgame, and its present afterlives. By attending to the experiential predicaments and subjective hopes of those relegated to the global undersides, this story speaks broadly to the concerns of other emergent disenfranchised social groups and the similar predicaments they find themselves in, in shared contexts of global capitalism. If, after all, the contradictions of global capitalism first appear in the peripheries (by which I do not principally refer to geopolitically fixed territories or essentially defined social bodies, but to zones of subaltern activity that are to be found also in the centers of capital), then it is also there that we can find both the creative capacities of people struggling to surpass the limits of the life to which they are condemned and the apparatuses of capture minted by capital and state powers to appropriate those creative capacities and their political potential.

Historical Experience

Examining Philippine literary depictions of contemporary social problems, I ask, what is the role of specific historical experiences in bringing about and shaping the large-scale transformation of the political and socioeconomic organization of Philippine life in the last thirty years of the twentieth century? The aim of this inquiry is to attend to the political seeds of an alternative future, which already exist in the form of devalued social modes of experience. As Fredric Jameson writes, "The seeds of the future already exist within the pres-

through political praxis (the workers of the Paris Commune, Marx once remarked in a striking phrase, 'have no ideals to make'; they merely sought to disengage emergent forms of new relations from the older capitalist social relations in which the former had already begun to stir).⁶ My own analytical method follows this insight. It consists of conceptually disengaging emergent modes of social experience from older forms of politically valorized subjectivity. These emergent modes of social experience are seeds of the future to the extent that they are the means by which people extricate themselves from and thereby impel the transformation of dominant social relations. Although in contrast to Jameson I would argue that the temporality of social relations is not so straightforward. Emergent modes may well consist of older forms, which the progressive forms of (modern) experience may have supplanted or at least pushed into the recesses of "backward," "developing" social subjects, just as older modes emerge as the fallout of the new. Thus, the seeds of the future may have long incubated in the everyday practical memories we carry with us and invoke in our literature.

By "historical experience" I do not mean only people's collective responses to the objective social and economic conditions in which they find themselves. I also mean the collective subjective practices they engage in that help to produce and remake those objective conditions. Experience consists of this human *activity* of mediation between self and social reality, that is to say, the cognitive, semiotic, affective, visceral, and social practices of relating to the world that individuals engage in as part of the process of producing themselves. These practices of mediation, which are socially organized, help to constitute both individual selves and the socioeconomic conditions to which they are subject. In this sense, experience does not belong to some deeply personal realm; subjective forms are products of this mediating activity as much as socioeconomic structures are products of labor. Experience is to be understood, as Teresa de Lauretis writes, "in the general sense of a *process* by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed."⁶ In my view, this process results not only in the effect of subjectivity, but also in the effect of worldly realities. To revise Louis Althusser's famous thesis, there is no subject except in and for a material world. This does not mean that the relation between subject and the world is one of adequation or, as in Althusser's view, a matter of reproduction.⁷ Insofar as the material world consists of social relations of domination and subordination, the experiential process is at once the means and site of social struggle. The process by which

world in and for which they are subjects.

In Part I, for example, I discuss the experiential practices of syncretic sociality, or *kapwa* (shared subjectivity), engaged in by Filipinas that contributes to their feminization and commodification within and outside of their communities. These practices of *kapwa* can be seen to fundamentally support the conditions of state-sponsored prostitution that obtained during the period of the Marcos dictatorship and thereby to demonstrate, against progressive political analyses of the complete objectification of women for and by capital, the productive power of "prostituted" Filipinas. In a second historical moment, these same practices of extended subjectivity and permeable selfhood are to be gleaned in the faithful and fate-playing actions of great numbers of Filipina women leaving their homes and the nation to fuel the "warm-body," or domestic labor export industry. Superseding the sex tourism and light-manufacturing export industries as the primary dollar-revenue-generating industries of the national economy in the postauthoritarian period, the domestic labor export industry and its determinate role in globalization can be understood as in no small measure the consequence of the experiential practices of self-making on the part of an emergent Filipina diaspora and the revitalized traditions of personhood, cosmic power, and spiritual mediation on which these experiential practices depend. Through their literary rendering of these devalued yet absolutely vital experiential practices, Filipina writers make these other social relations available as potential bases of new political movements.

New and old modes of experience and subjective practices operating in emergent social formations are therefore to be viewed as cultural means of structuring and restructuring dominant social relations of production. *Things Fall Apart* argues that the historical potential of experience as a social activity lies in its creative character. Feminists have long argued for recognizing the creative power, if not strictly value-productive character, of activities understood through the rubric of feminine reproduction.⁸ They have also argued for the fundamental importance of activities contained within the realm of the private to the political and economic activities comprising the putatively broader realm of the public sphere. Bringing these feminist arguments together with Marxist arguments about exploitation as the *modus operandi* of capitalism, I view social experience as a form of creative or living labor that is subject to exploitation. As Antonio Negri defines it, "Exploitation is precisely the seizure, the centralization

therefore it is an economic determination in a very meaningful way—but its form is political.⁹ Systemic political and economic structures are predicated on the organized expropriation of the creative labor of social experience through sociocultural logics of nationhood, gender, sexuality, race, religion, and other categories of social difference and exclusion. Expropriation does not refer to the theft of any specific quantity of surplus labor time, as the Marxist labor theory of value would understand it. Rather, it refers to the subsumption of the immeasurable time of social cooperation, which feminists and third world intellectuals have shown to be indispensable to the productivity of labor and therefore to the creation of wealth and power.¹⁰

Indeed, what Marx understood about land and other natural resources—that they are fundamental means of people's life production and self-production, which, through processes of force as well as capitalist development, both social and technological, they are continually dispossessed of—some, including Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Jonathan Beller, understand to be true of technologies and social practices of immaterial, intellectual, and sensorial labor. While attention to activities once classified as unproductive work, including consumption, as labor is often paid in reference to the formalization of such work under post-Fordist economies, Marxist-feminist thinking about culture, social cooperation, sex/affective, and reproductive women's work (Maria Mies, Claudia von Werlhof, Victoria Benthholdt-Thomsen, Ann Ferguson, Gayatri Spivak) has importantly demonstrated that capitalist accumulation has historically and continuously depended on the "primitive accumulation" of "non-capitalist" resources and work, embodied in the naturalized forces comprised of the activities and personhoods of women, colonized natives, and slaves.¹¹ Such thinking builds on Rosa Luxemburg's insight about how, in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialism, capital needed noncapitalist strata to reproduce and expand beyond phases of simple profit. Contrary to her expectation, capitalism did not reach the limit of this expansion with the colonization of the entire world and the incorporation of the rest of the world's territorial noncapitalist strata within the command of capital (a limit that would have constituted the conditions for capitalism's collapse). What was beyond Luxemburg's purview is the fact that capital had not exhausted other forms of noncapitalist strata as continuing sources of appropriable value. Besides spheres of labor reproduction delegated to women and to traditional

classes within metropolitan countries), capital has found and produced new noncapitalist strata as sites of appropriation of value. As the work of Jonathan Beller argues, capital "burrows" into the body, "mining" it of value, a phenomenon remarked upon by others as the absorption of "the production of subjectivity" in the processes of capitalism.

While capitalism has long relied on the noneconomic practices of colonialism, both of internal and external populations and their subsistence economies, as a necessary part of its logic of accumulation, it is certainly true that contemporary capitalism has found ways to incorporate arenas of human activity that had remained outside of its formal productive economy (such as domestic labor and other service work in the former colonies) within its new global industries, just as it has commodified natural resources that had remained part of the commons (such as water, seeds, and genetic material).¹² If we denaturalize these newly capitalized human and nonhuman resources and understand them not as freely appropriable nature but as the products of organized sentient, bodily capacities and energies (forms of cooperation that traverse human agency), then it is possible to consider social experience as an important force and means of life-production of those very human and natural resources.

The point is not so much to expand the concept of labor to subsume all human experience under this category, but rather to utilize the notion of labor as appropriable life-making social capacities and as a theoretico-political standpoint to examine the role of immaterial and bodily practices of experience of marginalized social groups in contemporary relations of accumulation and production. As I show in this book, just as the national sex work and domestic labor industries depend on the expropriation of the social experiential practices of women, so does the specific regime of accumulation achieved by the Marcos state known as crony capitalism depend on the expropriation of the social experiential practices of informal labor. In Part II, I discuss the latter experience in terms of adventurism, the fate-playing, speculative practices of the urban excess or lumpenproletariat, which I argue contributes both to the activist ferment of the late 1960s and early 1970s and to the crony capitalist regime that establishes itself on the basis of this political crisis.

In addition to the notion of historical experience as socially organized and socially producing subjective practices (experience as living labor), I am also working with the notion of historical experience as the concrete articulation

might say, a reassemblage of heterogeneous symbolic and material practices) that provides a dynamic situated picture of a historical moment.¹³ Jun Cruz Reyes, the author of a novelistic memoir of urban life immediately following the declaration of martial law, demonstrates this notion of historical experience in the picture of authoritarian "development" that he creates out of his pedestrian meandering. Adopting the mode of life of the urban poor, Reyes's protagonist becomes a scavenger, at once refuse and refuse collector, creating a narrative collage of the unassimilable residues of Marcos's New Society in order to map the corrupt, repressive regime on which urban development depends. Similarly, in Part II, I reassemble constitutive connections between the liminal urban experiences articulated by Jun Cruz Reyes, Jose Lacaba, and Tony Perez and the transformation of Metro Manila from national capital to protoglobal city. In doing so, I am able, like Reyes, Lacaba, and Perez, to provide a dynamic picture of late Philippine urban modernity from the point of view of its human refuse.

If modernity is the project of obtaining a universal synchronicity of historical time, a project that entails the separation and hierarchic differentiation of social space and the sloughing off of populations — the production of surplus peoples — as its refuse, this is also a project that demands the devaluation and elimination of the diversity of times. Temporality is cleft between a time of history and times of waste. In the picture of urban modernity rendered by these authors, times of waste are not only the fallout of the time of catastrophe that is development; they are also diminished and disposable forms of life.

To render the historical experience of late modern urbanization from the side of these disposable times and lives, I look for tangential experiential practices that, while participating in the making of a dominant order, nevertheless elude its logical categories of social and political agency. In the liberative claim to a transcendent human value as a measure of coping with urban sexual abjection that Perez articulates, for example, I find the practice of what I call a queer faith in frivolous material details (*kiyeme*), in times spared from exchange. These practices of faith in excess matter entail another kind of self as well as another possible form of historical agency, than the self-possessed, self-valuing, and truth-bearing masculine subject that Perez politically constructs as a liberated gay subject. Out of these practices of faith, Perez pieces together a self that is commensurate with the new metropolitan subject supporting the emergent social order of global urbanism — the subject that is called civil society. And yet the very tangential

place within such an order. It is from the side of this contradictory historical experience that we can see the hidden human costs of metropolitan achievement.

Historical experience is thus both the imaginary, affective, sociosubjective activity that impels and shapes prevailing relations of production in a particular sociohistorical formation and the hermeneutic perspective that recognizes alternative agencies in the making of history, which such activity affords. In Part III, I discuss the way outmoded or chiliastic spiritual practices continue to operate within, even as they exceed, the Messianic structure of experience of revolutionary struggle. Though diminished by party and Left criticism as semifeudal habits, practices of spiritual mediumship and of cult value are shown in revolutionary literature to operate as affective technologies that make possible the everyday life of the movement. A consideration of the fundamental role that these same affective technologies played in both the so-called spiritual revolution of the middle class that ousted Marcos and the paramilitary vigilante violence that followed on the heels of democratization demonstrates the broader unfinished process of cultural transformation, which the movement played a central part in shaping. It provides a glimpse of the surplus cultural resources invented within the course of revolutionary struggle whose political possibilities remain unexhausted by progressive political organization and strategy.

The surplus of cultural resources generated out of the historical experience of social struggles attests to the surplus of meaning and activity that is intrinsic to experience. In the revolutionary movement, such surplus can be found in the form of surplus life that is produced through rituals of radicalized grief and the invocation of what I call divine sorrow, serving as the very means of continuing struggle in the face of fatal losses incurred in war. And yet, even as practices of revolutionary experience play an important role in the production of existing conditions of struggle, they necessarily exceed their role as means of existing life, even of existing hopes. Surpassing their utility for the present, experiential practices of struggle can become seeds of the future or seeds that fall by the wayside of history. What we make of such practices, just as what we do with real seeds ("as the site and symbol of freedom in the age of manipulation and monopoly of life"), will shape the fate of our struggles.¹⁴ If we are not to be contained by the destinies of our own age, it is worth remembering what third world postcolonial and antiracist intellectuals have foregrounded as the modern foundational role and as yet unrealized political promise of impeded life possibilities, desires, and

into being, or into presencing, by symbolic as well as material orders of domination and exploitation. From this renewed standpoint of dispossessed historical experience we are thus led to envision forms of political action and alternative futures that are at once immanent in and yet seemingly outside of the dominant historical imaginations of existing social movements.

Literature and Experience

The very concept of historical experience, which stems from the political exigencies of the present moment, allows a sustained consideration of the ways in which seemingly tangential subjective practices in peripheral social formations such as the Philippines participate in local makings of global subjects and their universal forms and conditions of possibility. It allows us to read social movement literatures as themselves kinds of "cultural software" for the transformation of dominant social relations. In this endeavor these literatures do not merely represent or thematize the historical experiences of existing social subjects (for whom they are means of expression); they also deploy socially shared modes of experience and subjective practices as a way of creating new social subjects with transformative historical agency. They are, in this regard, technological interventions in the process of subjective production of existing social relations.

Almost all the literature I analyze here regards itself precisely as an instrument of subjective change, though often it articulates this task as the changing of consciousness. Since the anticolonial movement against the Spanish empire, Philippine literature has been compelled toward the evocation of transformative historical experience. Besides decoding the social and cultural organization of power at a given moment, it has articulated through the historical experiences it renders standpoints for the coming into being of new social actors who would change the material conditions in which they find themselves. This renewed attention to historical experience not merely as submerged truth-content but also as practical social media has valuable repercussions for thinking more generally about strategies of political struggle in contemporary postcolonial contexts. It also allows a reconsideration of the potential of postcolonial literatures for putting into language vital forms of acting and being in the world that fall from the purview of the modern worlds they have helped to create.

An attention to literature as imaginary works forces us to consider the work

Reading literature enables us to move away from the false typicality that more conventional works of anthropology and sociology tend to read and establish by means of oral testimonies, real stories of real people.¹⁵ This typicality also tends to inform minority histories, in which stories come to express the life and life-movement of a larger, preconstituted collective identity, conceived through the given form of a hegemonic political subject. As Dipesh Chakrabarty writes, "Minority histories, one may say, in part express the struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracies."¹⁶ To the extent that they aim to be adequate to an independently existing historical, sociocultural reality, accounts of Filipino culture and social life participate in the hegemony of realist and historicist representation that continues to prevail over academic knowledge production.

Although it uses literary texts as ciphers of experiential technologies, this book is not primarily concerned with the institution of literature and its products and values, or even with the political economy of world literature. Neither, however, is it concerned with literature as a transparent example of culture, conceived as a realm separate from the realm of politics and economics or as a repository of "the touch of the real," which can be excavated and seized by a literary studies seeking to recover lived life.¹⁷ Even as anthropology and history increasingly turn to literary sources to support claims about the discursive, cultural constructions of the real (while, conversely, literary criticism turns to historical archives and real events to do the same), this book does not use literature as a representation of lived experience.¹⁸ As Gilles Deleuze writes, "Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond any livable or lived experience."¹⁹ I understand writing as a practical experiment in the possibilities of experience — an exercise in becoming — that necessarily draws on prevailing social modes of experience in order to create those possibilities.²⁰

On this view, literature is a worldly artifact, subject to specific and general rules of production and both limited and open to particular kinds of relations with other worldly artifacts, such as film and music, as well as cooking utensils, overpasses, and graffiti, newspapers and political treatises. Thus I do not look to literature for typicality or representable realities; I look to it rather for creative possibility. Creative possibility recasts lived experience so that it no longer takes the form of incontrovertible social fact but instead takes on the experimental character of literature itself. Literary works are figurations of possibilities of life

they are also theoretical perspectives on both dominant and residual cultural logics of social life. In the analyses I undertake here, literary works are thus treated as both ethnographic material (ethnography of social imagination as much as of actually lived life) and theoretical resource for writing an alternative history of the present, a history that foregrounds the creative work and transformative potential of marginalized social experiences and their unrecognized role in the making of the contemporary world.

At the same time, literature is itself a technology that limits while it articulates what Sylvia Wynter calls specific "genres of being human" in the interest of involvement in truthful human experience.²¹ As Michel Foucault argues, our present forms of discourse, including literature, are constrained by a will to knowledge and a need to validate themselves on the basis of true discourse. Similar to what Foucault lauds as increasing contemporary attention to discontinuities and interruptions beneath the great continuities of thought and discourse, my interest in the discontinuities of plot, subject formation, and logics of social relation lies in the uncovering of forces of flight, points of insubordination, behaviors, capacities, and conducts that exceed or escape the structures governing political narratives and the proper subjectivities of nation and social movements. My method of reading is thus not a matter of reading *against* the grain but rather *within* the grain of manifest representation, attending to those moments and gestures that stick to the analytical comb, appearing interruptive or out of joint or simply superfluous to the works' proper aims. In thus attending to such tangential tendencies within the representation of historical experience as elements of virtual life-worlds that might yet be organized into reimagined political claims, we make way for "the living openness of history."²²

Things Fall Away is divided into three parts, each focusing on a zone of historical experience of late Philippine modernity. These zones — namely, the feminization of labor, accelerated urbanization, and revolution — serve as sites for viewing the social, economic, and political transformations that have taken place since the early 1970s. Each part is composed of three chapters delineating the transformations experienced in a particular social zone in several moments. In the first part,

these moments are marked as (1) the restructuring of the Philippine economy into a female-fueled, export-oriented prostitution economy from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s and (2) the transformation of this economy into a domestic labor (or warm-body) export industry from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. In the second part, "Urbanization," these two moments are marked as (1) the developmentalist modernization of Metro Manila as the national capital under the Marcos regime and (2) the transformation of the metropolis into a global city in the post-Marcos period. In the last part, "Revolution," these two moments are marked as (1) the generation of a radical movement underground and the waging of a revolutionary people's war against the state and the ruling socioeconomic order and (2) the decimation of the revolutionary forces by an intensified counterinsurgency campaign and the preemptive weakening of the movement through the supposed restoration of democracy brought about by a revolt led by the middle class that deposed Marcos in 1986.

In each part, I examine the construction of the proper political subjects produced by the respective literary/social movements of feminism, urban activism, and revolution. I trace constitutive relations between, on the one hand, the modes of experience thematized and deployed in the construction of these political subjects and, on the other, the dominant socioeconomic relations against which these dissident subjects struggled. I then examine the subaltern subjective practices that fall away from the universal forms of political agency that these proper political subjects aspire to. These universal forms of political agency are delimited by the social categories of the commodity, money, and capital. Wynter argues that bourgeois European humanism inaugurated an economic conception of being human that now dominates our experience of ourselves, a domination propagated and furthered not least by the institution of literature. As she writes: "The *economic* conception of the human — *Man* — . . . unifies us as a species in *economically* rather than, as before, in *theologically* absolute terms."²³ Wynter argues further that "it is the bioeconomic conception of the human that we inscribe and institute by means of our present disciplines and their epistemic order, as Foucault shows so incisively, that determines the hegemony of the *economic* system over the social and political systems — even more, that mandates the functioning of the capitalist mode of production as the everyday expression of that hegemony."²⁴ It is on this view that we can understand the universal categories of commodity, money, and capital as dominant social representational

categories that serve as means by which certain experiential practices fall into subalternity and, correspondingly, as the interpretative horizons beyond which it behooves us to imagine other possibilities for political agency.

Global South Theory

The specific modalities of social life in a seemingly peripheral social formation such as the Philippines do not merely demonstrate the localization or vernacularization of global forms, as many accounts of alternative modernities would have it. Rather, these modalities of social life provide hermeneutic elements for understanding the productive dimensions of local, cultural activity and, by extension, the unrecognized productive forces of globalization itself. (If globalization is the very process of generalization and universalization of life forms through the interpellation of diverse cultural practices, Philippine authors are explicitly as well as tacitly involved in social projects that are themselves part of these processes insofar as they have universalist political aims.) But this is not a localist argument, to the extent that I very much rely on the analytical resources generated out of other postcolonial or global south contexts. Scholarly works on minority contexts and the historical experiences of slavery and immigration in the United States as well as transnational feminist works in Egypt, for example, provide important resources and affiliative solidarity for thinking about overseas Filipina domestic labor and contemporary nonsecularist forms of belonging; other works on political forms and informal work and non-work in the contexts of Puerto Rico, Cameroon, and Tanzania inform my interpretation of urban informal labor and adventurism; and revolutionary imagination in Latin America and China shapes my views of the Philippine revolutionary movement. These works of and from the global south, as the site of some of the most vigorous processes of labor exploitation and social dispossession as well as some of the most vibrant historical and contemporary social movements in the world today, have shaped the hermeneutic possibilities I have found in the Philippine context. In this collective endeavor to understand the periphery of the advanced capitalist world beyond Eurocentric accounts of it, I find an emergent theory of hidden and unacknowledged productive forces of the global economy.

Thus, features of postmodernity that appear to characterize some of the historical experiences I describe here can be seen to derive to a great extent from the inventions and innovations of marginalized global peoples struggling to mate-

rially imagine themselves out of present, unrepresentative modernity. Only through hermeneutic perspectives afforded by subaltern historical experiences of globalization can these inventions and innovations and their tangential roles in the making of generalized forms of globality such as postmodernity be recognized, hopefully to be recast in the directions of histories that are truly alternative to the ones now available to us. In the mode of creative restitution proposed here, experiences that seem destined for disappearance and loss will no longer be the inevitable leavings of those proper liberatory struggles that, from the distance of an achieved global system, appear to have failed. Rather, they can become the very means to realize as yet untried, if not unimagined, viable, just modes of social life.

Unlike early subaltern studies work, I locate cultural subalternity not in clearly delineated realms of indigenous or traditional practice outside of capitalist structures but rather precisely *within* capitalist processes and relations. This book is premised on the idea that the outsides of capitalism are everywhere to be found in cultural practices in the moment prior to their subsumption by universal capitalist forms. "Outside," then, refers not to a particular spatial or social location on the field of political exchange but to a missed temporal dimension subsisting within and yet different from the time of capital. It refers to what Dussel describes as the seemingly trivial, useless, and unproductive practices of people's experiential activity, which remain invisible to the capitalist economy and continue to "bypass the oppressor's 'universal culture.'"²⁶ If, as Fanon reminds us, "every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time," it is by understanding these cultural practices within the diversity of their times — what appear here as the times of waste and of suffering as well as the time of castaways, of passion and divine sorrow — that we can view the dynamism of human creativity and struggle.

Raymond Williams writes, "No mode of production, and therefore no dominant society or order of society, and therefore no dominant culture, in reality exhausts the full range of human practice, human energy, human intention."²⁷

The recognition of those dimensions of human practice, energy, and intention that are *not* exhausted depends on conceptual apparatuses provided by their practitioners and on the epistemological/cosmological instruments they employ. These practitioners are not a unified group — they are socialities in the making, socialities whose constitutive limits are created and defined by the very structures of experience they invent and draw upon in the course of their social

postcolonial petty bourgeoisie, the authors discussed here show their participation in these struggles as they attempt to go beyond the imaginary limits of their own social destinies, becoming in the course of these struggles, among other things, feminists, activists, and revolutionaries. In doing so, they show themselves to be part of the very forces creating the dynamism of changing Philippine social relations.

The growing global social polarities and antagonisms everywhere remarked upon are thus produced by people themselves, not merely by the inhuman structures of capitalism and other hypostatized agents of oppression. In the literary works I analyze here, we witness this negative kind of social agency, which is infrequently commented upon in the celebratory accounts of agency as resistance that abound. Here we see liberatory practices intricately intertwined with practices of devaluation, diminishment, and suppression. On the other hand, social practices that appear to support the material conditions of prostitution, crony capitalism, and semifeudal social relations, which stand readily condemned from the available moral-political positions of progressive thought, are shown to yield other political potentials, creative cultural resources that are continually stolen by dominant social groups and then used by these groups to make damning moral judgments against their inventors.

This is a tale of dispossession and lost potential, told, like many other tales of dispossession and loss, with some measure of anger, some measure of sadness, and some measure of hope. In my estimation, efforts to remake the world, not from a transcendent or idealist site of politics but rather from within an ever-compromised yet also ever-promising world, must have these measures — anger, sadness, hope, such paltry words considering what they might invoke and what changes the experiences of tangential life might yet bring about.

PART I Feminization

Revolutionary Imagination and the Masses

Awakened, the masses are Messiah.

— EMMANUEL LACABA

In the face of the practical universal humanism of civil society that begins to obtain during the postauthoritarian period, it is, I believe, important to reconsider the meanings and possibilities of the anti-imperialist solution to the national crisis in the 1960s and early 1970s. This solution took the path of revolution, a path that led precisely outside of the City of Man and its metropolitanist aspirations. Beyond the suspension of the catastrophic time of capitalist progress, revolution posed the possibility of another temporality, a radical future whose promise lay in the verso of metropolitan humanity: the masses.

The distinction between revolutionary nationalism and the nationalism of the state is understood to hinge precisely upon the very content of the nation as it is defined by the notion of the masses. Hence, in direct confrontation with the conservative bourgeois nationalism of the Philippine state, Jose Ma. Sison, the leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) since its founding in 1968, proclaims the need to clarify the term "people" as part of the project of a transformative national democracy: "The term 'people' has been much abused through populist sloganeering employed seasonally and professionally by bourgeois politicians and bourgeois publicists in the same manner that they abuse the

ately used to include certain classes in our society which merge with the masses of our people."¹ The abuse of the term "people" stems from the use of the exploitative classes in what should be a category of the exploited classes, forces that are also "the popular forces of national liberation and nationalism." These forces consist, briefly, of workers and peasants who make up 90 percent of the Filipino people. It is through the subtraction of the exploitative classes from the term "people" that one thus arrives at the concept of "the masses," which in its positive form is articulated as the political struggle against imperialism and feudalism.

Historically, the Filipino people come into being in the late nineteenth-century revolutionary struggle against Spanish colonialism. They are the embodiment of the nation as a positive embodiment of the social antagonism between alien power expressed in the Philippine revolution. As Sison asserts, "Nationalism must be understood as a historical phenomenon, the product of the life and practice of an entire people, which attacks the foreign exploiters and necessarily builds up the forces of national progress through the revolutionary struggle."² The Filipino people are therefore commensurate with the revolutionary nation, which is at once the object and source of a "revolutionary imagination . . . bound by a common enemy and by the same system (of exploitation). It is this revolutionary, antagonistic imagination which is at the core of the praxis of struggle (as opposed to the stabilizing practices of and for a homogeneous 'imagined community') that distinguishes true — that is, progressive — nationalism from the nationalism of Western powers with which the Filipino nationalism becomes aligned. Indeed, it is through the alienation and betrayal of this revolutionary imagination and struggle that bourgeois Filipino nationalism comes to be defined.

In "The Need for a Cultural Revolution," a speech given in 1968, Sison describes the contemporary deprivation of our youth and elders of the praxis of "the national-democratic struggle of our people." Subjected to the cultural and educational control of U.S. imperialism, Philippine youth are deprived of a sense of national and social purpose — "the political awareness of a revolutionary community" and "the desire for a modern national-democratic society" — which infused the cultural revolution of the late nineteenth century. Youth's loss of the originary purposive sense and desire of the revolutionary nation is

interpreted as the very embodiment and locus of an unfulfilled revolutionary struggle from which the bourgeois Filipino classes have, in their material and experiential trappings of a foreign culture, become alienated. The task of a cultural revolution or a Second Propaganda Movement is to return this alienation by turning to the masses as the source of revolutionary knowledge: "Learning from the masses and being with the masses is our generalizations for action and formulation of solutions more effective and dynamic. We become immediately one with the masses in their

struggle of learning from and becoming one with the masses serves as the basis for a revolutionary literature. Following the aesthetic program of Mao Tse Tung (in *Talks at Yenan Forum*), Sison asserts that an important task of cadres in the realm of culture is to "serve the masses" — to make in cultural works their lives, their needs, and their desires as the basis of revolutionary struggle.³ "The masses" hence becomes the answer to the question confronting writers during this time: "For Whom?" At the time of the formation of *Panulat Para sa Kaunlaran ng Sambayanan* (Writing for the People) (PAKSA), during which Sison outlines the task of revolutionary writers, the answer to this question which revolutionary literature must address becomes extended from a literature for the masses to "Panitikan Mula Sa Masa" (Literature from the Masses and toward the Masses).⁴ Following the tenets of cultural revolution, I am attempting to demonstrate the importance of the masses as a heuristic object for the creation and definition of a revolutionary nationalist subject.⁵ The notion of "the Great Philippine Nation" which the Philippine nation came to great prominence after the Second World War, defining national politics in the postindependence era and becoming a central theme of nationalist historiography. As Carol Hau writes, "The 'Great Nation' provided the representational space for highlighting the emergence of the 'masses' out of a diversity of material and historical situations. The 'Great Nation' also charted the divergent trajectories taken by the so-called elite and the masses: Philippine historiography recast the 'masses' not as passive subjects of 'great men,' but as the true subjects of Filipino, the true agents of national confirmation."⁶

From which educated Filipinos have become alienated and therefore must return to which they must reintegrate, the masses become the revolutionary

The land fulfills urgent tasks in the people's war

And wages armed struggle from start to finish

— JASON MONTANA

"sentimental love for the masses" in terms of a symbolic commitment to reality. "Now, reality for us is honorific. Lately we have come to equate it with the masses because they approximate for us the gross, unadulterated and stark aspects of the national situation. For in our sense of what constitutes reality, we have nothing more than those aspects of the cultural condition that suggest chaos and brutality. . . . So that it is this meritorious relation to reality that underlies our commitment to the masses and the attempt to approximate their supposed values and "crude, vulgar and tyrannized" behavior in the realm of politics and culture, the masses are pushed to the margins of national life. Daroy argues that the stunting of Philippine art and intelligence that stems from this "sentimental love" for a reality that is taken to be "the hard, defined and inner mass uncorrupted by perception or sensibility" is but the revenge of the masses for having been betrayed by the Filipino intelligentsia in the revolution against Spain. This political rejection is no doubt what accounts for the alienation of contemporary Filipino intellectuals from "the national actuality" and, further, the sense of guilt that is expiated by this symbolic commitment to the masses. It is precisely this fetishism of the masses in the elitist liberalism of the 1950s and 1960s as well as the hegemonic commitment to a certain kind of realism that supports such fetishism that Sison and the legions of radicalized students wanted to negate.

As the symbolic lynchpin of bourgeois alienation, the masses thus became the key to the liberation of the minds and lives of the youth, who now recognized the need to go beyond a symbolic commitment to them and to begin the task of identifying with them. The task of identification with the masses generates a whole new body of literature that attempts to create solutions to the problem of alienation, solutions that might largely be described as socialist-realist. The task of identification also generates the very movement to the countryside (as a movement toward the masses) that helps to realize the course and content of the political-economic revolution. Both socialist-realist writing and the movement underground are processes of constitution of the revolutionary subject by means of the masses as the enabling object and objective of the latter's revolutionary praxis.

Eugen Karatani writes, "Realism in modern literature established itself within the context of landscape. Both the landscapes and the 'ordinary people' (what I have called people-as-landscapes) that realism represents were not 'out there' from the start, but had to be discovered as landscapes from which we had become alienated." Karatani's account of modernity in Japanese literature helps to illuminate the shift in the role of the masses or people-as-landscapes from social realist literature to revolutionary literature in the Philippine context. While in social realist literature the masses serve as objects of description and contemplation for the politically conscious writer, a social relation which preserves the alienation in their discovery, in revolutionary literature the masses become the objective and means of the desiring movement of revolution, which is itself the process of overcoming this alienation.

We see the exemplary instance of social realist depiction of the masses in the fictional works comprising the anthology *Mga Agos sa Disyerto* (1964). In what amounts to a naturalist treatment, the masses are shown to be the objects of a relentless and spiraling violence whose immediate, particular sources are, from the perspective of a revolutionary class analysis, identified without its social causes being understood. As such, while they serve to awaken the consciousness of their readers, the stories offer no indication of a necessary course of action following upon such consciousness nor any relation to the masses beyond their serving as the mute cause of the awakening.⁹ Sison's own earlier collection of poetry, *Brothers* (1960), accomplished a similar documentation of the brutality suffered by the masses, a generalizing portrait of the masses as victims which, by Sison's own later self-critical account, stemmed from a detachment from concrete, revolutionary involvement with the actual masses.¹⁰ Although alluding to a comprador class in conspiracy with foreign powers at the root of such violence and therefore correct in its political viewpoint, Sison argued, these poems failed to mobilize the masses and potentially progressive classes into a revolutionary becoming.

Enchanted," "The Coming of the Rain," and "Rain and Sun on the Mountains," the masses are identified with a dynamic nature, freed of the colonizing spirit of superstition and empowered with the spirit of revolutionary struggle. This nature acts at once as a source of inspiration for the revolutionary subject ("The heroic prisoner is like a giant; / He draws his strength from the masses") and a material flux with which he becomes rhythmically integrated ("The guerilla is like a poet. He has merged with the trees. . . . The guerilla is like a poet. Enrhymed with nature / The subtle rhythm of the greenery / The inner silence, the outer innocence / The steel tensile in-grace / That ensnares the enemy"). As the objective and means of the cadre's revolutionary becoming, the masses as nature is not a mere rhetorical device. It is, rather, a technology of imagination that is fundamental to the practical life of the movement.

Sison, using his nom de guerre Amado Guerrero, authored the main theoretical works that established the ideological-political break between the new Communist Party of the Philippines and the older Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), and he had clearly seen the ideological weakness of William Pomeroy's novelistic rendering of the nature he experienced while briefly engaged in the PKP-led armed struggle of the Huk movement, a peasant movement that evolved out of resistance against the Japanese occupation.¹¹ Against Pomeroy's depiction of the forest as an immense, confining fortress overwhelming human agency and of the rain as a relentlessly assaulting enemy, which Guerrero charged as a defeatist displacement of the real enemy (namely, U.S. imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism), he suggests the importance of reimagining the same, difficult rain forest conditions of Philippine nature as enabling and advantageous conditions of revolutionary warfare. This crucial turn in imagination, which Guerrero extends to the archipelagic and mountainous geography of the Philippines in the tract "Specific Characteristics of Our People's War" (1974), itself developed out of the disastrous initial experience of armed struggle of the New People's Army in the province of Isabela. It articulated a shift in military strategy from the Maoist strategy of establishing "stable base areas" or fixed strongholds in the countryside from which to launch major offensives toward the creation of spatially dispersed mass bases to serve as vital supports for mobile guerilla warfare.¹²

The forging of a new "policy of centralized leadership and decentralized operations" out of the political-military challenges posed by the particularities of

Philippine geography demanded a new line of attuning the theory and practice of revolution to the concrete conditions of struggle. Although it deviated from a specific Maoist strategy, it invigorated the more general Maoist injunction to "discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth."¹³ It also heightened the significance of the Maoist principle of self-reliance, which depended on heeding the imperative to integrate with and learn from the masses: "Self-reliance can never be overemphasized among us. The basic needs of our people's war have to be provided for by the people's army and the broad masses of the people themselves."¹⁴ After all, the progressive masses were, under these reimagined conditions, what comprised the life bases of guerilla warfare.

In revolutionary literature, the masses are both the material means and the symbolic object of revolutionary struggle—while they are the cause on whose behalf the struggle is waged, they also serve as vital sources of food, shelter, protection, and information for the guerilla forces. As such, they are identified with the land, which similarly functions as the terrain and objective of the movement, to the extent that the movement aims to destroy the feudal control of the land and restore it to the people. In Ruth Firmeza's guerilla novel *Gera*, the masses and the land are the ground of revolutionary activity, both to be known and mastered by the guerilla; as Arman advises another comrade, "Kabisado mo ang tercyen at ang masa" (Master the terrain and the masses) (22). This equivalence drawn between the masses and the land as the terrain of struggle is made clear in Firmeza's poem "Pitso Manok," the name of a mountain in the zones where the guerillas move:

Pitso Manok, from your embrace we have gone away
to be with the masses in another place who have been
waiting for so long
a new zone we have established
to form part of our united ranks
like you, they embrace what we are fighting for.¹⁵

Like the mountain, the masses are a zone of action, a field waiting to embrace the liberation that the movement brings. They inspire hope and strength as a *place* of revolutionary potential.

While the nation is figured as a mother—"All our lives / We offer to you Mother" (277)—the mountain, as one of the nation's land formations, is figured as a young woman—"They say the mountain is like a sleeping maiden" (280). While the nation is a feminized symbol serving as the point from which the revolutionary forces imagine themselves as a unified historical subject, the land is a feminized object which, as experientially shared by the revolutionary forces in the process of struggle, becomes a significant structure of collective sexual identification. This shared feminized object is the means by which the collective body of these forces becomes an acting subject; it also functions as the object of desiring action on which this fused revolutionary subject enacts its particular masculinity. Land and woman are places of tilling and insemination, defining the revolutionary action that is performed on them as heteromass line.¹⁶ The substance of revolutionary inspiration, which the land offers, is therefore the very same masculinist desire that is spent on its construction as the object and terrain of struggle. Watered and nourished by the blood, sweat, and tears shed by guerillas, land becomes the surface of inscription of the vicissitudes and sacrifices of the revolutionary movement.

Configured as land, the masses act as a feminine object of loss through which the revolutionary subject constitutes itself as the agent of historical transformation. Guerilla zones thus become feminized substitutions for the lost object. In Levy Balgos de la Cruz's story "Ang Mga Alaala'y Parang Mga Alitaptap" (Memories Are Like Fireflies), for example, a man's loss of his mother, his wife, and his children, which he incurs when he decides to go underground and leaves them behind in the city, is replaced by the land of the revolution: "a place where the rivers are free and the springs pure. In the place of the masses and the comrades. In the middle of the path of struggle. In the spring of water and fire."¹⁷ De la Cruz's substitution of the feminine figures in his life with the feminine figure of the revolution (here embodied in nature) is supported by his quotation of Kahlil Gibran as part of his dedication to his mother: "Your children are not your true children / They are the children of their time." Determining this structure of experience is the temporal construction of the revolution ("their time") as a maternal figure, implicitly the figure of *Inang Bayan* (Mother Country).

The close articulation of the masses and nature or land as a dynamic, empowering presence serves an extremely significant practical, heuristic function

and nature or land and of the masses as nature to armed struggle, the main activity of the revolutionary subject, accounts for the notable recurrence of the theme of their intertwining in guerilla poetry. The poem "Summer" by Servando Maghanua, for example, likens the meeting of "small and silent streams" to "the handshake of a comrade long in waiting," and the monsoon season to revolution itself:

... that other season of fury
when monsoon rain turns streams
into rivers: swift earthy snakes
cleansing demons of destruction
sweeping all debris in frenzied abandon
headlong
to melt with the waiting sea.

Here as elsewhere Nature behaves
like patriots driven to destinies
of their own making . . .¹⁸

In this and many other poems in the collection of guerilla poetry *STR, Mga Tula Ng Digmang Bayan sa Pilipinas* (*STR, Poems from the People's War in the Philippines*), we witness tender descriptive tracings of the landscape's concrete contours, which undulate unevenly with practical and symbolic significance for the revolutionary subject. This oscillation, which stylistically can be described as the proximity of documentation and metaphor characteristic of much guerilla poetry, is itself partly the effect of the dyadic function of the masses-land for the revolutionary forces.

Hence, the figure masses-land has two aspects in relation to the revolutionary subject's constitutive activity. On the one hand, it is the enabling practical terrain or instrumental means of armed struggle. On the other hand, it is the ideal object and end of that armed struggle—or, put differently, the masses and the land are what must be liberated from imperial-feudal-capitalist control and, in their freed state, what revolutionary subjects must be liberated into. These two aspects of the masses-land function bear two different, though closely linked, paths of revolutionary subjectification.

In "Fragments of a Nightmare," Sison's narrative poem of the ordeal of prison torture that he underwent upon his capture in 1977, we glean the two dimensions of the revolutionary subject's constitution. On the one hand, the masses function as what Gelacio Guillermo calls the narrator's "devices of counter-offensive," such as wit, wile, raillery, dream, poetry.¹⁹ Alongside the images of the narrator's beloved and children, the masses are poetic images wielded to battle the mortifying assaults on his body. They are "avenging angels / Armed with the sharpest of swords" summoned for renewed strength in the revolutionary's heroic struggle against the inhuman demons of power. In this dimension, the process of subjectification of the revolutionary subject is a mirror-image, a reversal, of that of the bourgeois national subject whose relation to the masses is a relation to an object of negative identification. Here, love for the masses betrays a fetishistic aspect, which is also suggested by E. San Juan's interpretation of Sison's recurrent images as "memorializing an eroticized, Orphic harmony of nature and man."²⁰

On the other hand, the masses act as a movement into which the revolutionary's ownness (his own self, his own suffering) is dissolved: "But still my pain and suffering is small / As I think of those who suffer more / The violence of daily exploitation / And the rampage of terror on the land." Here, the masses are a humbling force, a suprahuman plane of action, the movement of suffering, vengeance, and struggle, to which the revolutionary contributes his minor yet essential struggle: "I belittle my pain and suffering / As I think of the people who fight / For their own redemption and freedom / And avenge the blood of martyrs." The masses are more even than real avenging angels. In another poem, they are the very voice of God: "The voice of the people thunders forth / From a burning bush in the mountain, / United to overthrow the rule of terror / And the three gods of exploitation."

This second dimension of subjective constitution is a revolutionizing one to the extent that the masses are no longer an image-object for the creation and mobilization of a proper, leading nationalist subject. In other words, the masses here become the subject movement within which the revolutionary is a vital, poetic (that is, productive) part. From the masses and toward the masses describes the reappropriation by the people of what is their historical product, the national bourgeoisie, alienated from them by and as capital. It also describes the

unlike strength embodied by the masses is, in effect, the restoration of the power that has been alienated from them in and by "the three gods of exploitation." It is the full realization of the aspiring revolutionary subject's process of becoming-masses. The redemptive process through which the people reclaim their alienated product, the bourgeoisie, is fueled and carried out by the radicalized students and petty bourgeois intellectuals who headed out in droves to the countryside to offer their lives in the service of the people. As famously pronounced by the martyred guerilla and poet Emmanuel Lacaba, this process on the side of the petty bourgeoisie entails the dissolution of their individualist selves and lives into a belonging that surpasses all human forms of possessive, identificatory belonging, a belonging that acts as a formidable, dynamic movement of nature in the earthly fulfillment of a divine restitution:

We are tribeless and all tribes are ours.
We are homeless and all homes are ours.
We are nameless and all names are ours.
To the fascists we are the faceless enemy
Who come like thieves in the night, angels of death:
The ever-moving, shining, secret eye of the storm.
... Awakened, the masses are Messiah.
Here among the workers and peasants our lost
Generation has found its true, its only, home.²¹

The imaginary dissolution of petty bourgeois ownness thus finds practical expression in the actual exodus of the radicalized urban middle classes and, moreover, in their embrace of the people as the true voice of God: "Awakened, the masses are Messiah." This theism of struggle is a crucial aspect of that revolutionary imagination which the everyday religion of capitalism, with its secularist metaphysics of commodity relations, induces us to forget.

Revolutionary imagination here comes out of actual social practice.²² We might say such imagination is the very active means and material process of revolutionizing existing social relations of production between the masses and the elite classes. To the extent that the armed struggle enables peasant-workers to transform the usurious dependency that binds them to the agricultural elite, through the reappropriation of land and other means of their production, it

the personages of the landlord class. The efforts to revolutionize agricultural production on the part of peasant-workers—sometimes with the direct participation of red fighters—which are documented in the literature of the movement as well as in aboveground publications, are themselves tentative material realizations of what revolutionary imagination has already prophetically made possible: the reassumption by the masses of their creative potential.²³

In Sison's own prophetic practice, "whose visionary mission is to simultaneously demystify the alienated world and project images of apocalyptic rebirth," revolutionary imagination dissolves existing reality into a poetic epic of struggle.²⁴ The guerilla is like a poet, but the revolutionary poet is also a worker turned guerilla to the extent that he or she rewrites and reinscribes the naturalized reality we live in as a matter of people's poesis.²⁵ The bladed poem, the tool of creative labor turned into arms, thus acts as the means for the reappropriation and release of the creative potential of the masses. In a poem by another revolutionary cadre, "Magsasaka: Ang Bayaning di Kilala," we read of the transformation of the farmer from oppressed slave ("Busabos na'y alipin pa") into a free producer-author of his own destiny: "Araro ang gintong plumang sa lupa'y isinusulat, / Bawat salitang matitik sa pinitak ang sambulat" (The golden plume writing on the land is a plow/Each written word, what is scattered in the rows).²⁶ These visions attempt to create the heroic proletarian figure out of the masses as the leading subject of the revolution, cultivator-creator of a new era.

The restoration of the creative capacity of the masses as divine power is, however, different from their heroicization as revolutionary subject. While the latter process pertains to the reversal of the subjectification of the bourgeoisie, who take on the heroic personality of the capitalist, the former process pertains to the assumption of the universal totality of capital itself. As the suprahuman plane of action into which, in the utopian moment, the armed struggle of revolutionary cadres dissolves, the masses are the very absolute movement of becoming that Marx describes as stolen, objectified, and hidden in the form of capitalist wealth: "In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than . . . the absolute working out of [humanity's] creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development . . . in the absolute movement of becoming?"²⁷ In the sublime face of this "absolute movement of becoming," the cadre, as revolutionary subject, experiences his own struggle as a small tributary of a divine passage from suffer-

ing revolutionary struggle, as the divine movement of the masses assumes the liturgical form and purpose of the Holy Mass.

The Underside of Messianism

I draw out the contours of the theism of revolutionary struggle not to attribute it, particularly in its unified form, to actual cadres, including Sison, as if it were the inner motivation of their actions. Although this theism explicitly courses through the words and deeds of many radicalized members of religious orders who joined the movement, it is not in the sense of ideological content that I refer to the theism of revolution.²⁸ The image of the masses as Supreme Maker, whose body cadres take in Holy Communion by taking part in the revolutionary movement, is rather the historical experience of reversal of the dominant Eucharistic logic of capitalism. To the extent that it resolves the crisis of alienation articulated by the radical nationalism of the 1960s, this theism of struggle characterizing revolutionary imagination helps to account for the profound power and sacred character of the calling to join the movement in the countryside that the student youth heard and heeded. It answers that void experienced by the faithless urban middle classes, which Gregorio Brillantes depicts in his short story "Dr. Lazarus," as well as that suffocating lethargy quietly rotting comfortably contained petty bourgeois lives, which Resil Mojares depicts in his short story "A Sickness in the Towns."²⁹ Against the spreading disillusionment with the emptiness and confinement of petty bourgeois existence that Philippine writers in English in the late 1950s and 1960s began to increasingly portray, as well as the intolerable exploitative and repressive conditions suffered by the majority of the people, which writers in Tagalog and other languages increasingly exposed and cried out against, not the idea but the *reality* of revolution offered a generation in crisis a new, invigorating Life, one imbued with the spirit of liberating struggle.

This collective narrative is more than a mere revolutionary myth of heroic commitment fostered by the atmosphere of state repression; it is rather the mode of revolutionary experience.³⁰ As Fredric Jameson writes of Ernst Bloch's own commitment, "The value of religion for revolutionary activity lies therefore in its structure as a hypostasis of absolute conviction, as a passionate inner *subjective* coming to consciousness of those deepest Utopian wishes without which Marxism remains an objective theory and is deprived of its most vital

was the very concrete experience of the life force in the "absolute movement of becoming" accumulated as capital, now restored as the movement of history through the release of humanity's creative potentialities. It is this theme of history-making and life-creating struggle that Sison depicts, in the poem "The Forest Is Still Enchanted," as the revolutionary enchantment that replaces the traditional superstitions of the people: "There is a new hymn in the wind; / There is a new magic in the dark green, / So the peasant folks say to friends: / A single fighting spirit has taken over / To lure in and astonish the intruders."³²

However, within the monotheistic spiritual experience of revolution persist other practices that are not fully subsumed by the cultural totality assumed of the revolutionary mass. These practices are evinced in Sison's poem "Defy the Reptile," in which the defiance of old beliefs is enacted through the destruction of false gods: "Thus, one crocodile god after another / Yields its teeth to the circle of spears. / And these become the amulets, tokens / Of proven willful strength of men." Amulets and spears allude to other practices of imagination, other kinds of poesis (such as the social relations instantiated in animist notions of power) that point to the concrete simultaneity of heterogeneous productive practices (not merely the practice of a single fighting spirit) at work in the revolutionary enchantment.³³ As the poem "O Langit, O Lupa" (O Sky, O Land), composed by a Waray settler-farmer reveals, many other powers besides the awakened masses' Messianic power are called upon as a resource for the waging of revolutionary struggle:

O Langit, O lupa, kami'y pakinggan
Itong aming sinapit aming itutula
Kung inyong maunawaan ang dahilan
Ipabatid sa ibon, ilog, kakahuyan.

[O Sky, O land, pray hear us
What we have suffered we will say in verse

If you should understand the cause

Send word to the bird, the river, the woods.]³⁴

The Nature to which the farmers fervently appeal to hear their case against the *buwaya* [crocodile] — "Landgrabber, by the name of lord" — who oppresses

chest, threatening to be unleashed as a deluge of stone and fire: "Our chests fill a great deal; / From them stones and fire cut loose / Until they pour out and rage in flood." In this poem, we witness other theistic practices besides that of the monotheistic spiritual experience of revolution, practices of imagination that tend to be seen, within a progressive historical-materialist framework, as "chiliastic" predispositions. They are "accretions of tradition derived from a feudal past" which mark the radicalized peasantry's still-formative development toward that awakened state of revolutionary enchantment.³⁵

From the viewpoint of political and ideological critics reassessing the status of Filipino Marxism within the movement, these peasant poems betray the persistence of an atavistic folk consciousness that the movement has not been able to overcome. Such poems confirm the suspicion of an abiding discrepancy between the lingering millenarian populism at the practical level of the mass movement and the Marxist-Maoist-Leninist worldview at the level of party doctrine.³⁶ As one of the fundamental charges against the PKP, this ideological discrepancy can be said to have helped spur the founding within it of the Marxist-Maoist-Leninist group in the 1960s (splitting off from the Lavaite PKP leadership) and the process of "rectification" that formed the very basis and direction for the establishment of the new Communist Party.³⁷ This is the other side of the process of de-alienation carried out on the part of the petty bourgeoisie: the process of sublation on the part of the peasantry of their persistent feudal tendencies. In a word, the awakening of the masses themselves.

In much revolutionary peasant literature this incipient awakening can be detected in rude moments such as in the second to the last stanza of "O Langit, O Lupa," where an abrupt change of address from *kami* (the exclusive "we," addressed to Nature as divine witness or judge: *kami'y pakinggan*) to *tayo* (the inclusive "we," addressed to the fellow farmer as comrade) constitutes the requisite gesture of proletarian solidarity and resistance ("But shouldn't we [tayo] fight / While there is strength in these joints?"). Or it can be gleaned from socialist imagery and sloganeering phrasings interrupting, in a constructivist-like way (jarring rhymes, uneven rhythms, linguistic ruptures), the smooth current of the romantic popular poetic tradition identified as *balagtismo*.³⁸ No doubt the discordance of poetic practices within the same forms can be attributed in no small measure to the political educational work carried out by revolutionary cadres among the peasantry. The imputation of a specific peasant mentality that

transformation and ideological advancement that constitutes the pedagogical core of mass work. We might say this peasant mentality is the motive object and product of the very work of cultural rectification that follows on the heels of the movement's political rectification process. The work of sublation that comprises cultural rectification (or what is also known as revolutionizing people's consciousness) serves as a powerful motivation of revolutionary literary practice as well as of the experience this literature helped to shape.

We cannot afford to underestimate the seductive and exhilarating force of sublation as a subjective experience, nor the crucial importance of this subjective experience for the very material strength and expansive capacity of the movement. Sublation is, precisely, the experience of a superhuman power to make destiny, which on the side of the dealienating petty bourgeoisie appears messianic. At the same time, we cannot ignore the creative resurgence of traditional practices of imagination *within* this very structure of revolutionary experience. The appeal to nature, which suggests extant animist beliefs; the unleashing of stones and fire from one's breast in an external deluge, which hints at the notion of a permeable self-serving as a medium of supernatural retribution; the figure of the crocodile lord, which recurs over and over again in vernacular Philippine literature and evinces a persistent mythical, pagan strain in everyday Christian thought—all these point to practices of imagination that, while not incompatible with the Christian structures of the Eucharist, redemptive death and resurrection, and the Last Judgment shaping revolutionary experience, are nonetheless incommensurable with them.³⁹ The persistence of these practices is determined to some degree by the very efforts of cadres to introduce "new revolutionary content" into "old forms," which means the revitalization of many traditional belief-media, including local expressive genres and languages.⁴⁰ But it is also attributable, in no small part, to the active coding by the radicalized masses of the social conditions and actions comprising the logic and trajectory of the movement, which they willed themselves to be swept into and to become an essential part of. That coding is not, as some would have it, a mere folding back into the categories of an older consciousness. It is, rather, a creative activity that, in the same way that it is irreducible to the universal structures of Christianity, is irreducible to the notion of historically autonomous, traditional modes of practical belief.

In *Pasyon and Revolution* and *Filipinos and Their Revolution*, Reynaldo Ileto portrays this creative cultural coding in Filipino subversive appropriations of the narrative of Christ's life, suffering, and death during peasant movements from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth.⁴¹ Like early subaltern studies and "histories from below" scholarship, in whose international political and historical currents his work can be biographically and epistemologically situated, Ileto's historical study brought into relief the particular historical instantiation of "universal history" wrought by "the traditional mind." This local hermeneutic allowed the masses, contrary to all intellectual, elite expectation, including that of progressive, nationalist revolutionaries, to revolt against the existing political and social order. Following upon Ileto's thesis that the peasants' unorthodox interpretation of the Passion of Christ, combined with their belief in spiritual magic, led them to revolutionary activity, Fenella Cannell argues, in her ethnography of contemporary "lowland Christian Philippines," that "the florescence of organised forms of healing which tightly combine the power of the spirits and intimacy with Christ are characteristic of periods of popular political activity."⁴² The combination of a more arcane magic with Christian structures displayed with such intensity during moments of insurgency, however, rests on more mundane and less sharply articulated practices of mediumship, which reveal a prevailing "indigenous" model of power based on mutable and fluid relations of personal exchange as well as on "resolutely plural" sources of supernatural "help."

Cannell's study of the culture of "people without nothing" usefully dwells on practices of their bodily unconscious rather than on any "mentality" attributable to the masses. However, emphasizing continuity with precolonial Philippine cultural practices, her examination of "lowland social imagination" is purposefully detached from any analysis of contemporary political and economic conditions. Even while admitting its openness to major mutations in situations of political intensity, the practices and relations of power that she retrieves as lowland culture during situations of "political quiescence," such as the present of her fieldwork (1988–89), are set against rather standard relations of capitalism, conceived as unevenly intrusive forces from the outside. From this "indigenist" perspective, which seeks to give just representation to enduring modes of belief

only a creative idiomatic relation and response to superior external powers, and its contemporary practice, "a palimpsest, the layering on top of each other of all those constructed relations" in a history of innovative and improvisational ritual performances.

In contrast to this tacit framing of the local as a place of culture and the global as the space of fully realized capitalist production, I view both culture and capitalism as consisting of symbolic and material practices that operate quite well before and beyond the abstract realm of exchange, on which this analytical-geographical separation is predicated. As I see it, the creativity of people's practices lies not only in the modulations of their cultural-textual performances, but also in their active production and transformation of the political and socioeconomic conditions that presumably serve as the mere context or pretext or object of those performances. On this view, cultural-spiritual negotiations of power and value are part and parcel of the particular mode of production obtaining in the countryside (tenaciously characterized as semifeudal, semicolonial, underdeveloped, and rent capitalist). This is not to argue that the animist and polytheist strains of practical consciousness or belief actions coursing through people's contemporary practices are merely the ideological reflection of an extant precapitalist mode of production, which seems all the more evident in the rural areas. Rather, it is to argue that as signifying praxis these belief actions are, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "tied to an assemblage, in other words, an organization of power that is already fully functioning in the economy."⁴³ The organization of power and accumulation that might arguably be typified as postcolonial or third world modernity is itself historically dynamic. The impossibility of casting cultural practices of mediumship as precapitalist or simply indigenous rests on the acknowledgment that such practices are contemporary, creative forces involved in the organization of the prevailing political and economic order and, therefore, are in no small measure responsible for the historical dynamism of the present. As I've shown in previous chapters, religion and spirituality are in political economy just as political economy is in religion and spirituality.

In the Indian and Anglo-American context, the work of subaltern studies has contributed enormously to the foregrounding of the by no means new but long-ignored question of the political (and to a lesser degree economic) significance of non-European bourgeois forms of social and cultural practice. Ranajit Guha's work in particular claimed a political status for the nonsecular actions of peasant

struggles in colonial times, against the "prepolitical" category of the "prepolitical." However, while Guha's intervention brought the world of gods and spirits of the peasantry into the political time of modern history through the notion of an insurgent peasant consciousness, that consciousness itself seemed to have no history. As Partha Chatterjee puts it, "Because of his objective of isolating an invariant structural form, in line with the structuralism inherent in his method, he has not attempted to give us a *history* of this consciousness as a movement of self-transformation."⁴⁴ While I agree with Chatterjee on this point, I see the need to go a bit further. In my view, Chatterjee's call for this history of peasant self-transformation demands, in turn, an account of the transformation of the conditions of life production sustaining the very social identity of this self and its historical consciousness. That is to say, it is not enough to recognize that the people undergo historical change. We also need to recognize that the people itself is a dynamic product of the continuous, active involvement of people's cultural practices in the changing conditions of political economy.

To return to the Philippine context, the political contestation over the representation of the masses can hence be viewed as part of the struggle over the very conditions of production on which the dominant meaning or content of this social identity was predicated. On this view, as a theory of the masses, Ilo's intervention has to be seen as participating in the transformation of dominant social relations of production that is taking place at the particular historical moment when both dictatorship and revolution are in the process of consolidation. As he writes in his acknowledgments, "My choice of subject matter was determined by much the same conditions that led the Filipino youth to question the nature of their society during the late sixties and early seventies. Being home in 1971 doing research was most rewarding, not only because the libraries and archives offered interesting material, but also because people around me were asking similar questions about the relationship of the past to the present." Those conditions leading Ilo to his own questions about the relation between intellectuals and the masses ("the Great Divide") were the very same material political and economic conditions of the 1960s that produced youth as a distinct social group, confronted with the question of national destiny raised by the crises of the 1960s.

Ilo understood the past to contain an untold, submerged history whose structures could be discovered in the mode of the popular consciousness. The

colonialism was in part the consequence of the failure of the postindependence nation to hear, much less heed, "the voices from below." His argument that rather than any properly nationalist framework, "the masses' own categories of meaning" fueled and shaped the peasant rebellions of the early twentieth century can hence be considered a political solution to the same profound crisis often answered with revolution.⁴⁵ We might say that in the radical spirit of critique shared across a wide spectrum of social actors and directed at an elite neocolonial nationalism, Iloeto's work also produces the masses as a means of intervention against dominant forms of making and writing history. However, insofar as it does so by making this substance into a subject, as it were, it unfortunately recontains, within the formal trappings of consciousness, the very political potential it set out to tap.

Let us compare Iloeto's political solution (masses as subaltern consciousness to be heard) with that of the national democratic cultural revolution. Within revolutionary literature, both the people/the masses and the petty bourgeoisie act as practical limits structuring the very movement of revolutionary becoming, which such literature participates in making. The political identity of the masses, while tending in many respects toward reification, predominantly serves neither as a political end nor as a means of participation in an existing order but precisely as the very means of transformation of the social and subjective conditions of the prevailing order. Thus although revolutionary literature fabulates this identity, by using it as a point of subjective processing of cadres as well as peasants, it also compels its undoing and transformation. The masses are one pole in the process of a double negation that comprises the *passion* of the movement, now to be thought somewhat differently from the "*pasyon*" (the Christian narrative of suffering and redemption), by means of which an autonomous insurgent subaltern consciousness can be claimed to be structured.⁴⁶

The transformation that Ed de la Torre baptizes as "The Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Petty-Bourgeois Christian" (1972) describes only one half of the self-transformative revolutionary *passion*, which I am claiming falls neither solely on the side of the insurgent peasantry nor solely on the side of the radicalized intelligentsia.⁴⁷ For both the petty bourgeoisie as well as the peasantry are the presuppositions and retroactive *effects* of their passional intermingling in an emergent regime of signs and in a reorganization of power and value production to which this signifying regime is determinately connected.⁴⁸

plane of the masses retroactively consolidates "the wild but shy poet/Forever writing last poem after last poem" of his bourgeois youth. The process of bodily and subjective change that he undergoes reveals, as it constructs, the identity limit from which his radical becoming departs:

You hear he's dark as earth, barefoot
A turban round his head, a bolo at his side
His ballpen blown up to a long-barreled gun:
Deeper still the struggling change inside.
Like husks of coconuts he tears away
The billion layers of his selfishness.

This is a recurrent theme in revolutionary Philippine literature: the radical mutation of the petty bourgeois body and soul.⁴⁹ Rather than an act of discovery of a true self, the tearing away of layers of selfishness that Lacaba articulates is at once the process of constitution and the process of dissolution of the prerevolutionary subjective state of guerilla forces. It is, in a word, part of the process of revolutionary metamorphosis. The practice of dwelling on the physical changes becomes the very making of a new body, a new home, a new terrain, through a taking part(s) in and of peasant life—the skin of earth, bare feet, the physical labor constituting one's self. These traits are material signs of the masses (part-masses) that serve as points of revolutionary subjectification. In this vector of subjectification, something akin to sharing, as at once a parting with one's own and a partaking of another's, takes place. Among and of persons, sharing denotes a phenomenon of hysterical influence that is predicated on socially contingent, extensive, and permeable forms of self, as evinced by the notion of *kapwa* (shared subjectivity).

In chapter 3 I showed how women attempting to free themselves from the worldly confinements of their national and gendered identity engage in a transformative practice of taking part(s) that depends on preconsumerist forms of self and becoming. These older technologies of shared subjectivity or extensive selves come to be displaced onto and demanded of women in the moment of their embodiment of feminized national labor. Refurbished in the transnational context of feminized labor, such technologies become vital means for supporting women's naturalized assumption of the commodity form. In the context of rural

associated with conditions of land tenancy, the word for which — *kasama*, or sharecropper — indicates a continuing vital connection between and common historical genealogy for the particular kind of shared subjectivity expected of tenant farmers and the general *kapwa* sense of self associated with indigenous Filipino culture. I am suggesting that petty bourgeois practices of taking part(s) in and of peasant life to some extent themselves depend on backward subjective technologies, which creatively persist as infrastructural supports for traditional modes of labor relegated to women and the peasantry.

Hence here the revolutionary subject-in-process finds power through proximation, a practice of self-transformation akin to those traditional practices of tapping into cosmic power through the tactile proximity of its sign-tools — amulets (*anting-anting*) — which both index and embody this power.⁵⁰ As “signs which give authenticity to a revolutionary life,” traits of the peasantry function for the radicalized petty bourgeois youth in this way: as sign-tools for the wielding of Messianic power.⁵¹ What we witness in the process of revolutionary awakening, therefore, is a practice of mediumship that goes beyond emotional rites of healing and their politicized expressions of relations of inequality. Guerilla forces participate in a passion with the people, a passion that is not so much modeled on the figure of Christ as its subject as much as takes after those experiences of bodily surrender, permeability, and transfusion of life force comprising everyday practices of spiritual contagion and faith healing.⁵² In other words, guerilla forces can be said to undergo a form of class mediumship, which entails their subjective pervasion by a spiritual energy located in the masses. This pervasion is carried out through a sharing of the masses’ traits. Rather than preconstituted human subjects in identification with the human passion of Christ, both the people and the guerillas are produced as subjective media of a revolutionary life force by their own revolutionary practices of class mediumship or class passion.

Despite its idealist permutations as a merely metaphorical process, there is a mundane, practical dimension to this active practice of sharing, which I’ve already mentioned as the work of people in the rural areas serving as the life-support system — providing food, shelter, vital intelligence, and logistical support — for the National People’s Army (NPA).⁵³ The guerilla is literally kept alive by the conduits that are the masses. In this way, he/she is their bodily product, their bodily part(ing). The masses are materially and symbolically foregrounded as life givers, thus altering their role in dominant relations of production as

the masses as “*yaong ang tadhana’y akin din*” (those whose fate is also mine).⁵⁴ Rather than a complete eradication of difference between guerillas and peasants, however, this active sharing re-creates the relation between them, making each a kind of medium of the other’s liberative transformation. We see this exercised, on the side of the guerillas, in the attempts to materialize the poetry of war with the labor implements of the masses. The poem becomes the worker’s machete, on one side toiling, on the other side fighting: “Grasp well the bladed poem / And let it sing in your hands / This *kampilan* is a talisman / Of the people in red headbands.”⁵⁵

In much socially committed poetry the deliberate confluence of words and things, the thematic and formal expression of the activity of writing through mundane activities of subsistence (which took on feminist significance in Mabanglo’s poetry), can be read as practices of class mediumship, toward which many writers were working. Poems such as Jess Santiago’s “Kung Ang Tula Ay Isa Lamang” (If a Poem Were Only) and “Isang Kurot sa Gunita” (A Pinch in the Imagination) broach class difference as a difference between accessory and necessity, between symbol and use, not through contrast but through a conversion of words into things: the poem into food, the song into a pinch. The conversion makes the difference it negotiates the site of a radical re-mediation of one’s relation to the world. We might in fact better describe the work as performing a confluence of media realms — of writing and producing, of the imagination and the body — that politicizes the practice of mediumship. In this way, the difference between urban subjects and the people and between their respective pursuits compels not so much a translation or process of identification as a sharing of tools and, through this transfer, a transmutation of one’s self-constituting activities.

And what of the masses?

To consider the *history* of popular practices of imagination (rephrasing Chatterjee) as the movement of social and political-economic transformation as well as self-transformation, let me compare what would appear to be two instances of an abiding popular mode of experience across a span of over a hundred years. Arguing for the importance of *damay* (compassion), as it is evoked in the *awit* (the traditional Tagalog metrical romance), in the constitution of popular anti-colonialist nationalism, Ileto quotes a stanza from the *Historia Famosa ni Bernardo Carpio* (1860):

what heart would not be overcome by this
and be saddened and struck with pain
for the two lovers with a pure *loob*?⁵⁶

Ileto cites this passage as expressive of "the experience of anguish and loss" that accompanies the central event of the *awit*: the separation of the infant from his parents.⁵⁷ The evocation of *awa* (pity) and *damay* was the principal means by which a patriotic remembrance of a lost past, anger over an oppressive present, and hope for future freedom were aroused and maintained among the people. It was what enabled the personification of national experiences and aspirations and, conversely, what enabled the transposition of personal affects to "a 'national' key."⁵⁸

Ileto's argument is that *damay* was a significant social experience during the revolutionary and rebellious peasant movements from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth. The argument rests on the popularity within such movements of those poetic and musical genres in which the affects of *damay* and *awa* for an abiding suffering act as fundamental emotive themes as well as formal principles.⁵⁹ Poems from the contemporary revolutionary movement would seem to provide evidence of the persistence of such cultural practices in the present time. Take, for example, "Magsasaka: Ang Bayaning Di Kilala" (Peasants: The Unknown Hero), a poem composed by an "activist farmer" in Kapampangan, the language of the North Central Plains. This poem became very popular among peasant farmers in Pampanga during the first few years of the 1970s and gained even more popularity through its use in mass meetings in different regions after being translated into Pilipino in 1978, and in Ilocano in 1980.⁶⁰ After a litany of the typical peasant's experiences of degradation and exploitation, we hear a lament very similar in form and content to the lament in the *Historia Famosa*:

Sino kaya, aking bayan, ang dito'y di maiiyak?
Nagpapagal ang siyang wala, limatik ang tumitipak.

O kawawang magsasaka, kaysaklap ng kapalaran,
Kung hindi sa 'yo, gubyrno ay hindi maipupundar
Hindi talos ng makwartang pag-aaring kinakamal,
Dangal at kapangyariha'y sa pawis mo bumubukal.

Kapangyarihan mong taglay at papel mo sa historya.

[Who, my people, would not be brought to tears by this?
The one with nothing took the load, the one who makes a bundle skimmed the cream.]

Oh poor farmer, what bitter fate,
Without you, the government cannot be founded
The money-grubbing ownership by grabbing cannot know,
Honor and power from your sweat spring.

Your name is kept hidden, not desired that it be made known,
Nor the power you bear and your role in history.]

Unlike the approach taken in the *Historia Famosa*, in which pity and compassion are drawn through a human experience of primordial separation, the evocation of *awa* and *damay* in this contemporary poem is strikingly borne by a proletarian consciousness of exploitation. Militancy is mixed with tragic complaint, an objective even scientific awareness of class struggle mixed with the involuntary feeling of grief and pathos in the presence of "bitter fate." Although it takes the same tribute form as the *awit* of the superhuman hero Bernardo Carpio, which might lead to the expectation of a divine resolution or messianic redemption, in this prayer we hear an appeal to a human power—the power of the people and of the unknown hero who is the farmer.⁶¹ These differences and admixtures attest to the conversion of peasant farmers through their participation in a process of sharing with petty bourgeois cadres engaged in mass mobilization.⁶²

This comparison of the two laments suggests a historical transformation in the deployment of *awa* and *damay* as cultural practices of mediumship. In the contemporary poem, the voice of proletarian consciousness mediates between the realm of the suffering heroic farmer, who toils under the tyranny of "the fascists," and the realm of the compassionate people (*bayani*), who hear the plight of the unknown hero. The passage through grief does not, however, translate into an appeal for mercy from otherworldly spirits, even as the naming of the fascists as "the Lucifers of the native land" acknowledges their malevolent earthly presence. The prayerful evocation of pity does not call forth a preordained time of redemption, a time when an unjust separation finds reparation in the fulfillment of a

Mother country. Instead, the rite produces the struggle to rewrite destiny: "Because of this, struggle against the haughty traitors, / Because of this, build a beautiful life. / Therefore, my people, etch with this seething bullet / The name of the farmer, the hero whom no one knows." Interestingly, even as the people are seemingly enjoined to sympathize and struggle with the farmer, both the people and the farmer are respectively addressed in the second person, such that the separation between them seems troubled yet not quite resolved. Although this final summons seems to be addressed only to the people, the cause for struggle it refers to is expressed in the previous stanza as the great sacrifice that "you," the "farmer," have been made to bear. In this way, the farmer's experience of fascist tyranny serves as the causative medium for the people's transport from weeping at the bitter fate of the farmer to etching his name with the seething bullet. Here the notion of authorship as historical agency conveyed through the notion of writing makes of land the people's own medium of modern redemptive sovereignty.

The historical movement I am trying to trace between the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century popular revolts and the contemporary revolutionary movement can perhaps best be delineated by the way in which the people have transmogrified from a subject effect of an identification with the Christ child, who awaits resurrection, into an agent force of revolution produced out of the very passion of the broad working classes. In today's revolutionary poetry, just as the sweat of the worker is the very life of the people, so the worker's suffering is the vital spiritual medium of the people's revolutionary uprising. This is no mere instantiation of proletarian class-consciousness. The worker's alienation is experienced through pity and compassion for a primordial human separation. It is thus that in the present the people are created out of older emotive practices of sharing. The people is the process of parting from the shared experience of suffering. In this way, the unknown hero that is the worker finds liberation by means of his own parting, as embodied now by the revolutionary people. Rather than a sublation of older practices or an underlying transhistorical indigeneity, we hear in this performance of mediumship the intermediate makings of a new poesis. In this light, what might be viewed as a mixed form, betokening either the incomplete development of a proper political consciousness or the surfacing within this proper political form of the counterforce of little changed "popular mentalities," should instead be recognized as

poetic form is, as Edel Garcellano puts it, "the bestiary of the present and the unfolding future."⁶³

Cultural Revolution and Historical Poesis

My aim in this chapter has been to argue for a closer consideration of the work of creatively resurgent and newly emerging practices of revolutionary imagination within the movement, both in the zone of literary-cultural struggle and in the zone of armed struggle. These practices and their poetic roles in revolutionary writing and warfare can be seen in a fundamentally continuous and supportive but also tangential relation to the proper cultural revolutionary forms and strategies advocated by the aesthetic and political program of the party. They are, therefore, not outside the movement and its formal logic. Rather, they are themselves partially the consequence of the organizing efforts of revolutionary cadres and, more broadly, the effects of the movement on prevailing social relations in the countryside. Equally important, these experiential practices are also vital, productive forces of the movement. By productive force, I mean "all and any of the means of the production and reproduction of real life," where production is considered "already a certain mode of social co-operation and the application and development of a certain body of social knowledge. The production of this specific social co-operation or of this specific social knowledge is itself carried through by productive forces."⁶⁴

Within the overall national democratic revolutionary program of the party, the effort "to transform the dominant colonial, bourgeois and feudal culture into a national, scientific and mass culture" through cultural revolution becomes an aspect of the larger revolutionary struggle for national democracy, the political and economic dimensions of which it serves to support.⁶⁵ The stipulations of "national, scientific and mass" as the defining characteristics of revolutionary culture as well as the broad guidelines for the instrumental role of culture in the revolutionary movement were initially laid down in the document "Program for a People's Democratic Revolution" and in *Philippine Society and Revolution* (PSR). They were subsequently elaborated and expanded upon by leading cadres in the cultural field, most importantly by the Red poet, writer, and critic Kris Montañez / Gelacio Guillermo.⁶⁶

As against the imperialist cultural nationalism of the ruling classes, which

ciling "divisions along regional, linguistic, religious, and ethnic lines" that this "compendium of imperialist and feudal thinking and value" itself inculcates. Guillermo maintains that national democratic culture represents the interests and furthers the cultural struggle of the oppressed and exploited classes.⁶⁷ This revolutionary culture is scientific to the extent that, in upholding "the correctness of the dialectical-materialist worldview," it encourages a habit of thinking "which liberates the mind from stifling traditions, myths and superstitions perpetuated by the ruling classes, and which enables the people to realize their capacities for change and to develop themselves and their society toward progress." And finally, it is a mass culture to the extent that it "embodies the democratic and collective ideals of the people, serves their struggles and depicts them as the decisive force in social change."

National democratic literature serves the people in two ways. First, by means of propaganda, as the dissemination of the objectives, methods, forces, and program of the revolution among the people in order to mobilize them on the basis of political demands. And, second, by means of cultural revolution, as the freeing of the people's thoughts and feelings from the chains of the ruling, reactionary culture and ideology, which impede their movements toward change. The bifurcation of the political and the cultural has important consequences for revolutionary practice in general. For one thing, it allows "revolutionary consciousness," as the politically awakened ideological state of the mobilized people, to take uneasy precedence over cultural forms of liberation, the latter becoming, as it were, the means of achieving the former, which in turn serves to drive the revolutionary movement as a whole. In *Philippine Society and Revolution*, Guerrero had already established the analogical and subordinate role of cultural revolutionary work in relation to the revolutionary movement as a whole. To the extent that the central task of the Philippine revolution was to overthrow U.S. imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism, armed struggle, as the primary strategy for carrying out this task, became the defining paradigm for the work of culture. As Guerrero put it,

Cadres in the cultural field should be like commanders waging a cultural revolution with the masses as their cultural battalions. They should continually link up the higher knowledge imparted to them with the general knowledge that they impart to the masses. They should always strive to raise cultural standards and popu-

larization together by developing a new revolutionary culture. The revolutionary workers, peasants and fighters should be the heroes of the new-democratic culture.⁶⁸

The masses are the raw material for a war of culture. In this cultural war, cadres act as a warrior-workers (guerilla poets) creating a revolutionary product through the infusion of their intellectual labor (the "higher ideological content" imparted to them by "Maoist-Marxist-Leninist Thought") into the raw material of the masses' experience.⁶⁹ This revolutionary product is precisely the heroic masses enacting the revolutionary movement of history according to the universal dialectical-materialist laws of class struggle.

Within this framework, the task of literary mass criticism becomes one of assessing, with a view to improving, individual works on the basis of "whether the work impedes or advances the revolutionary struggle." Montañez provides the exemplary demonstration of this kind of criticism, particularly in his influential review of the first novel to come out of the movement, *Hulagpos* (1980) by Mano de Verdades Posadas. Montañez criticizes Posadas's failure to give concrete shape to the individual characters and social landscape composing the paradigmatic transformative process of coming into revolutionary consciousness that is thematized by the novel.⁷⁰ Ultimately, Montañez's critical assessment of the work is determined by "the practiced assumption" (borrowing from Garcellano) of "the necessary movement of historical forces to achieve national liberation and democracy."⁷¹ This movement forms the basis for evaluating the protagonist's characterization and development as "the novel's unifying spirit, the spirit of breaking away from all forms of prison, from narrow petty bourgeois outlook to the exploitative social system itself."⁷² The heroic figure must thus subjectively realize the objective process that Mao, after Marx, describes as the movement of history: "The history of mankind is one of continuous development from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom."

The practiced assumption or belief in the objective movement toward freedom expresses a "prophetic revolutionary optimism," a revolutionary faith that is not simply mechanical or merely ideological, as most interpretations of the Philippine Left's utopianism would now have it. It should be recalled that the new revolutionary movement found fuel in the critique of what the CPP called the subjectivism of previous leaderships, "the main petty bourgeois disease" which alternately expresses itself in the forms of dogmatism and empiricism.⁷³

ist futurism. In another context of nonsynchronous modernity, Walter Benjamin writes, "It is really imperative that we understand, in precisely its polemical bearing, the apotheosis of organization and of rationalism which the Communist party has to promote unceasingly in the face of feudal and hierarchical powers, and that we be clear about the fact that the movement itself comprehends mystical elements as well, although of an entirely different sort. It is even more important, naturally, not to confuse these elements, which pertain to corporeality, with religious elements."⁷⁴

Against the religious character of capitalist metropolitanization under the dictatorial regime, which I discussed in the previous chapter, the first generation founders of the new party promoted an apotheosis of history that, through the structure of feeling of an impeded self-making destiny (for which the notion of the unfinished revolution of 1896 was a significant symbolic expression), called people to commit their very lives to its release. More than simply an enlightening text, Guerrero's *PSR* provided the structure of a new faith. Petronilo Bn Daroy describes its historical impact:

It is possible to say that *PSR* lent the popular anger during the First Quarter Storm a sense of direction. It invited us to review the history of the country and the course which Philippine society had taken as a result of the history of colonialism.

No single book in the Post-War era had exposed more fully the nature of Philippine feudal conditions, the reinforcement it received from imperialist interest and how the conditions generated by feudalism and imperialism found issue in our behavior, attitudes, morals, and manners. No other book, to my knowledge, provides us the key to the understanding of Philippine society.

It was this simple exposition of Philippine reality, with its explicit faith in the capability of the people to change the course of history and, by implication, their individual destinies, that made the *PSR* the guiding spirit of the First Quarter Storm and, if the military is to be believed, of the revolutionary movement as a whole.⁷⁵

PSR can be read as the most significant work of revolutionary literature since the reestablishment of the CPP and the founding of the New People's Army. Its immense role in the recruiting, consolidating, and organizing of students, professionals, workers, peasants, and the poor as forces of the revolutionary move-

munication through which later mass-cultural work as well as logistical and intelligence support of armed struggle would be coursed. I've already discussed the ways in which Sison's speeches and writings in *Struggle for Democracy* shaped the movement toward de-alienation that constituted the crucial *practiced* difference between revolutionary nationalism and its bourgeois counterpart. In *PSR*, Sison/Guerrero provides an additional layer to the structure of feeling of an interrupted destiny for the nation implicit in the earlier work, and this is the experience of peonage.

The perception of Marcos as the instrument of the usurious dependency of the Filipino people as a whole broadens the experience of peonage, which appeared to be specific to the rural peasantry, to a national scale. Indeed, much of *PSR* is devoted to characterizing the alienation of Philippine resources, particularly land, and therefore the alienation of Filipino sovereignty, as the consequence of what Gayatri Spivak, following Samir Amin, has called the "debt-bondage and tribute-system practiced by foreign aid . . . and foreign trade."⁷⁶ In persuasively depicting U.S. imperialism as "the worst usurer in the whole world," to which could be attributed the "economic enslavement of the Filipino people,"⁷⁷ Guerrero made the everyday tributary relations of the rural peasantry into the framework of experience and structure of feeling for the radicalized youth, a youth that, as we've seen, came to experience its own intense form of deracination and dispossession with the declaration of martial law.

The raw material of the masses' experience can thus be said to have shaped the experiential forms of revolutionary consciousness, not simply indirectly by serving as the object of revolutionary sublation, but rather directly by acting as the organizing medium of revolutionary subjectification. Rather than serving merely as the content that was to be organized by revolutionary subjects into the historical unfolding of class struggle, the experience of peonage and its tributary relations on an international as well as national scale become the very subjective condition of revolutionary struggle. It is this very casting of revolution as a disalienation of the people from the original basis of Philippine nationhood, that is, anticolonial struggle, that made the movement so compelling as a practical social endeavor and ideal. In contrast to the assertion of the disappearance of the peasantry, a claim that has undergirded critiques of the continuing validity and relevance of the revolution's Maoist ideology, I am suggesting that revolutionary struggle de-essentialized, even as it may have also hypostasized, the subjectivity

society as a tribute-paying economic formation in the international context of imperialism (upheld by rent-seeking policies of import substitution as well as export-oriented development), Philippine Maoism nationalized the structure of imagination and feeling of the semifeudal peasantry, even as the peasantry's experience was itself undergoing reinscription by the scientific rational imagination of national democratic revolution. On this view, rather than simply composing the objective social relations of the Philippines, social relations of semifeudalism became a central structure of radical national experience, bearing the practical force of a social fact.

In this light, we can read Virgilio Almario's criticism of the poetry collection *Mga Tula ng Rebolusiyong Pilipino* (Poems of the Filipino Revolution) against the grain of his modernist political-aesthetic valuation. Almario complains about these poems' lack of stylistic originality, their epidemic homogeneity of expressed experience, and their reliance on stock formulations [*"de-kabong formula"*] of hardship in the midst of prosperity, which predictably ends in rebellion.⁷⁹ He writes, "This kind of formula is even more mystical than the archaic faith in the 'wheel of fortune' and if it is not a symptom of a shallow grasp of the complexities of revolution, it nevertheless makes one doubt that a power exists that could fulfill this political line." Almario's criticism of the poems' ideological and aesthetic limits inadvertently foregrounds those persistent mystical elements that I am arguing support the new revolutionary faith in history. As Benjamin asserts, however, these mystical elements, which pertain to corporeality, are to be distinguished from the apotheosis of organization and rationalism promoted by the party (in its "practiced assumption" of the teleological movement of history) or that vulgar Marxist determinism implied by Almario's remarks and referred to by Antonio Gramsci as the "blind faith of historical materialist determinism." In my view, the mystical elements gleaned in revolutionary poetry are not the product of a superficial, mere metaphorical grasp of a profound and more complex material reality that a more rigorous, more refined (less weak, less vulgar) political-aesthetic consciousness could plumb and give expression to. They are, rather, signs of an active recoding of the mystery of the mode of tributary relations called neocolonialism.

Such recoding does not, however, replace the mystical notions of power supporting rural peonage with a scientific or truthful understanding of real relations, as Almario would have it. Instead, practices of signification tied to the

imaginary imagining of new social relations. Thus, for example, with the framing of Philippine alienation through the experience of peonage, the mysterious power that accrues to the despotic regime through tributary or patronage relations is meant in such a way as to support a true revolutionary faith in a cosmic reversal.⁷⁹ Likewise, as I've tried to illustrate, practices of class mediumship, through which social relations of tributary power are produced and negotiated, serve as the subjective means of a revolutionary awakening. In the revolutionary enchantment of the land, we see the emergent expression of the concrete, sensuous presence of human agency as a messianic force.

By understanding the historical experience of national peonage as a real social force, as opposed to a mere theoretical conceit that might be compared to more objective or scientifically verifiable structural conditions, we are better able to understand the changing resources and potential of revolutionary imagination. I am suggesting another approach to what is called the modes of production debates within the movement, by which is meant the theoretical conflict over what structural conditions obtain in the Philippines—whether semifeudal or properly capitalist—and what, on the basis of these conditions, the corresponding revolutionary strategy should be. Revolutionary literature offers another view of the revolutionary movement, this time from the subjective perspective of social imagination and experience, which can also offer a picture of the Philippine mode of production. Here I refer to Jameson's proposal for the ultimate object of literary interpretation, that is, "cultural revolution, that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life."⁸⁰ In Jameson's account, the notion of cultural revolution, which he takes from the context of the incomplete Chinese experiment, would befit Bloch's idea of the "nonsynchronous development" of cultural and social life. The notion fulfills, furthermore, Marx's program for dialectical knowledge "of rising from the abstract to the concrete," that is, "the setting in motion of hitherto static and typologizing categories by their reinsertion in a concrete historical situation (in the present context, this is achieved by moving from a classificatory use of the categories of modes of production to a perception of their dynamic and contradictory coexistence in a given cultural moment)."⁸¹ Rather than adhering to the evolutionary storyline of the abstract modes of production narrative, my own analysis has tried to focus on the dynamics of contradictory re-

revolutionary experience.⁸³ This historical experience reveals the nonsynchronous and contradictory dynamics of cultural praxis of struggle in the concrete situation of Philippine life. Moreover, it points to the continuing yet changing role, within this concrete historical moment, of the tributary mode as a social force of experience.

As I show in the next chapter, the subjective technologies and symbolic practices supporting extant tributary social relations are in the course of struggle transformed into important resources of revolutionary imagination. They are not simply old practices resuscitated for new conditions or, in the language of party criticism, traditional forms infused with revolutionary content, practices, and forms that remain essentially unchanged. As Eqbal Ahmad writes, "One's relationship to technology, to social customs, to the very symbols of colonialism, of oppression, changes when you enter into struggle."⁸⁴ Through revolutionary praxis, the organizing practices and forms of dominant social relations are not only transformed for the purposes of struggle. They also help transform struggle by creating new modes of social praxis. In this way, the mystical elements that the revolutionary movement comprehends become social and subjective technologies of historical poiesis, where poiesis refers to the process of production of new realities, new selves.

Guerilla Passion and the Unfinished Cultural Revolution

If it is true that the revolutionary Filipino people were, as I argued in the previous chapter, the product of practices of class mediumship between the radicalized urban petty bourgeoisie (students, intellectuals) and the radicalized rural peasantry during the early 1970s, it is also the case that by the late 1980s the Filipino people would once again be shorn of their revolutionary mandate and their political-genealogical relation to the heuristic object and historical subject of revolutionary imagination, the masses. As opposition to the dictatorship expanded to the middle classes and oligarchic elites, the people increasingly came to be defined in relation to the liberal nationalist project of the dictatorship's political opposition, as centrally figured by Senator Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino and, upon his assassination by government agents in 1983, by his widow, Corazon Aquino. With this political opposition eventually taking the hegemonic lead in the People Power Revolt of 1986, which deposed Marcos from authoritarian rule, the liberative potential of the people similarly came under the interpretative apparatuses of the newly consolidated centrist forces of the postauthoritarian state. Instead of the revolutionary messianic temporality opened up by the theistic experience of armed struggle, which interrupted and reversed the catastrophic modern capitalist time of the authoritarian state (see